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San Francisco Chronicle

Tuesday, October 16, 1984 San Franc

OBITU

Sister Catharine Julie

Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham, retired president of the College of Notre Dame in Belmont, died yesterday of cancer at the age of 74.

Sister Catharine Julie was president of the college for 24 years, from 1956 until her retirement in 1980. During that time, the college became co-educational and increased in enrollment from 200 to 1400.

After retiring as president, she assumed an advisory position as the college's first chancellor.

A native San Franciscan, she graduated from Notre Dame elementary and high schools in the city and the University of California in Berkeley. She entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur of Belmont in 1932 and later received a master's degree in history from Catholic University in Washington.

In 1978, Sister Catharine Julie was presented with an honorary doctorate of humane letters from the University of San Francisco for her "accomplishments and leadership in Catholic education."

She began her career as a teacher, then became a principal of Notre Dame high schools in San Jose, Belmont and Alameda.

SISTER CATHARINE JULIE
College of Notre Dame leader

Sister Catharine Julie was a director of the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development in San Francisco and a director of the Independent Colleges of Northern California.

She is survived by a sister, Mary Frances Cunningham of San Francisco.

Visitation will be from 3 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday) in Memorial Chapel at the College of Notre Dame, followed by a rosary at 4 p.m. and a Mass of Christian burial at 7:30 p.m. Visitation will also be from noon to 9 p.m. today and from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. tomorrow at White Oak Chapel in San Carlos.

Memorial contributions may be made to the College of Notre Dame, Belmont, Calif. 94002.

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Society of California Pioneers Series

Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham

A NATIVE DAUGHTER'S LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATION: COLLEGE OF NOTRE DAME, BELMONT, CALIFORNIA, 1956-1980

With an Introduction by
Norman Cousins

An Interview Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1982

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

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Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham
President of the College of Notre Dame
Belmont, California 1980

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PREFACE

The purpose of The Society of California Pioneers is the collection, preservation, and proper maintenance of historical material of all kinds relating to the early days of San Francisco and California. We have since our founding in 1850 taken upon ourselves the responsibility of preserving the records and relics that are indispensible as ties binding the past to the present and future generations. Further contributing to this ambition, The Society in 1977 initiated an Oral History Series. The intent of the Series is to preserve the recollections of men and women prominent in their respective fields whose achievements, knowledge, and expertise form a significant contribution to the history and progress of California. They record in permanent form the continuation of the traditions of California's founders.

These memoirs have been created by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation. James Irvine, 1868-1947, was the son of a forty-niner, a native of California, and Director and Vice President of The Society of California Pioneers from 1928 until his death. Through the James Irvine Foundation he left an enduring legacy to the people of California.

This fourth Oral History in the Series, related by Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham, places the McCarthy and Cunningham families in San Francisco community history, and chronicles the growth of the College of Notre Dame at Belmont, California. Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham's accounting of the college's development not only relates to the history of Catholic schools, but also brings into focus the larger pattern of changes in higher education in the San Francisco Bay Area.

November 1983

J. Roger Jobson
Executive Director
The Society of California Pioneers
San Francisco, California

SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA PIONEERS SERIES

McLaren, Norman Loyall, Jr., *Business and Club Life in San Francisco, Reflections of a Pioneer Scion,* 1978.

Shumate, Albert, M.D., *San Francisco Physician, Historian, and Catholic Layman,* 1981.

Rosenberg, Margaret Barbree, *San Bernardo Rancho and the Southern Salinas Valley, 1871-1981,* 1982.

Cunningham, Sister Catharine Julie, *A Native Daughter's Leadership in Education: College of Notre Dame, Belmont, California 1956-1980,* 1983.

Dullea, Charles W., in progress.

Rowell, Margaret Avery, in progress.

INTRODUCTION

In 1915, Sir George Birdwood, the English philosopher, described modern Western civilization as "secular, joyless, inane, and self-destructive." These melancholy adjectives have since been augmented by the apprehensions of a wide range of thinkers. Alfred North Whitehead spoke of the veneer of civilization that separated us from grim realities. Erich Fromm, Rene Dubos, and F. S. C. Northrop are only a few other Western thinkers who have expressed their concern about the lack of progress in the realms of morality and education alongside the explosive advances in science and technology.

The issue here is not whether these apprehensions are correct. The issue has to do with the response of those who may be in a position to do something about it. Sister Catharine Julie has unhesitatingly accepted the challenge to educators to prepare young people for turning back what some contemporary thinkers refer to as a "grim inevitability." She understands that the most important resources in the world are not uranium or petroleum or manganese; she sees the human mind as the greatest resource of all, and she has dedicated herself to the development of these resources in every way open to her. She has inspired the people in the surrounding community no less than her teachers and students to believe that they can have a hand in their own destinies. She knows how to create and release human energies in the cause of human progress. No educator I know has given individuals a greater sense of their own possibilities.

John Dewey once wrote that the purpose of education was to enable people to come into possession of all their powers. This has been Sister Catharine Julie's great achievement -- not just as an educator but as an individual. In her work at the College of Notre Dame in Belmont, California, she has created an atmosphere conducive to creativity and vital growth. She

knows that the ambiance of education is hardly less important than the content of education; accordingly, she has created an atmosphere in which the learning process can prosper.

It would be incomplete, however, to write about Sister Catharine Julie as an educator without also calling attention to her work as public citizen. She has never turned down a request having to do with service to the community. Her school has always been open to any undertaking in the public interest.

In saluting Sister Catharine Julie, therefore, I salute her not just as a college administrator but as a public servant.

Norman Cousins

30 September 1983
University of California at Los Angeles
Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral
Sciences

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Catharine Julie Cunningham, a member of the teaching ministry of the Order of Notre Dame since 1935, and retired in 1980 as president of the College of Notre Dame, Belmont, California after twenty-four years developing that institution, was invited in November 1981 to be a memoirist in the Regional Oral History Office's Society of California Pioneers Oral History Series.

The invitation to Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham in part read:

> The Regional Oral History Office has a continuing interest in documenting the history of higher education in the Bay Area. We have interviewed administrators and professors and many dedicated trustees of colleges and universities in the area, who have provided their views of the growth of private and public educational facilities. We look forward to doing a memoir with you, the focus of which will be your tenure as President of the College of Notre Dame. Oral history is, of course, biography and we are interested in family background, early years, your education, and your first experiences in the field of teaching. We also wish to record your point of view on issues of Catholic education, and on other educational institutions in the Bay Area.

In January 1982 the interviewer and Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham met in Ralston Hall, the Ralston family mansion, the oldest building on the college campus and an historic landmark on the Peninsula. As an old catalog described it, "it contains...the ballroom of Ralston days, a spacious dining hall, brilliant with crystal chandeliers, etched glass doors, and silver fittings. The upper floors of this spacious mansion provide residence for the faculty." In her position as chancellor of the college, Sister Catharine Julie had her offices on the second floor of the building. She was really the lady of the house, enthusiastically knowledgeable, as one who has been at home in those halls from early days. The interviewer was

treated to lunch and a tour. We talked about what the oral history process would be like, and about her friends, Dr. Albert Shumate, interviewed earlier in the same Society of California Pioneers Oral History Series [*San Francisco Physician, Historian, and Catholic Layman*, 1981], and Margaret Barbree Rosenberg [*San Bernardo Rancho and the Southern Salinas Valley, 1871-1981*, 1982]. The proposal that she be an interviewee had been enthusiastically seconded by those longtime members of the College of Notre Dame Governance Board.

Some months later, in September of 1982, after summer vacations and travels, and after research in the president's files provided by Sister Catharine Julie, and readings in Catholic higher education, the interviewing began, continuing weekly through November 18. It went well from the start, when as an interviewee Sister Catharine Julie was understanding and open to questions that reflected in part the curiosity of the interviewer experiencing a person with a deeply religious orientation. Through a sea of questions about administrative decisions and changes, she was an agreeable and a working partner in the oral history process. She was as well-prepared as she could be--and that depended on how closely an outline of questions was followed--and she unhesitatingly plunged into every question, demonstrating a notable ability to think on her feet. Her memory recall of those twenty-four years of the presidency was impressive.

The central issue in the interviewer's mind, in constructing the outline, and reviewing and understanding the life of Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham from childhood to the presidency, was: Why was *this* college so solid and so successful, growing from fewer than 200 undergraduate women in 1956, to 1,358 men and women in day and evening programs by 1980? Those were years of the rising and falling of many institutions of higher learning, years of innovative entries into education, and quick exits. In the 1970s "more than half of the 141 independent higher educational institutions that closed...were religiously affiliated. Of those, over 75 percent were Catholic. Half of the Catholic affiliated colleges that closed were seminaries or specialized institutions. But 28 were four- and two-year, coed and single sex, Catholic colleges." [Mary Pjerrou Huckaby, *America*, September 20, 1980.] The central questions, Why was the college successful? and, How did it survive and flourish? are answered in large measure by looking at the evidence of Sister Catharine Julie's willingness to change and to do so very constructively.

In January 1982, preparatory to doing the oral history, the interviewer met with Sister Mary Dominica McNamee, Professor Emeritus of Latin at the College of Notre Dame, and author of *Light in the Valley* and *Willamette Interlude*, both histories of the Order of Notre Dame de Namur, and of the teaching ministry of the Order. When asked about President Emeritus Sister Catharine Julie, Sister Mary Dominica recalled the beginnings of College of Notre Dame as a four-year institution, first under a sister "brought from the east," and then another president who followed. Then

she said,

> Sister Catharine was a natural. I always wanted to see Sister Catharine Cunningham get a chance at it. A good many of us did; all the people that were talking about it and were interested at the time were saying to one another, "She'd be a very good one." She has a certain drive, and she has also a very good sense of public relations. And for the building up of the new college, that would be extremely interesting.
>
> I remember that the head of the Order here on the coast, Sister Paula of the Sacred Heart, she spoke about that to me a number of times, that Sister Catharine would have the drive....Our foundress [Saint Julie Billiart] was the kind of woman who wouldn't stop at anything....Her attitude was always education, and so she wouldn't be at all surprised, she would have been delighted, if she had met somebody with Sister Catharine's drive.
>
> Sister Catharine knew how to make friends....I used to be impressed by the people that she knew....But I don't think it's ever been easy. Sister Paula was the most forward-looking sister at the time, and she was in a place to do something, so that it was partly because of her desire to build up the college that the thing got started. From the beginning I would have said we needed a person like Sister Catharine to step in.
>
> She just had a way of reaching out to people and bringing them in.

Sister Catharine Julie's appointment was, as she reports, by a telephone call from the provincial superior informing her that she would be brought down to the college in the fall and would take over the presidency. It is enlightening to learn more of how she was viewed and appreciated by the older teaching sisters. They were putting a good deal of their future into her hands.

One can compare the 1983 aims of the college [see Appendices] to the general objectives in 1953, "to develop learned, cultured women, trained according to Catholic principles integrated with Catholic Theology...to train the *mind* of the student, and secondly to accentuate in each student the Catholic *heart*...to produce women of strong character, of principle, of individuality, of strength that springs from self-mastery, of courage that dares to do right." The mandate then, when Sister Catharine Julie was coming in as president, was training of women devoted to the home, and to civic and social leadership. The profile of the college now is very different; the mind and heart are still developed, but the student pop-

ulation is broader, and the governance allows greater and deeper meaning to the word "Catholic."

In the oral history we wished to learn more of the background and beginnings of Sister Catharine Julie. Like the Catholic woman described in the catalog of thirty years back, she had self-mastery and individuality, and she also had a sense of the times that made her--as Norman Cousins points out in the Introduction--a greatly-admired educator. Her background and education had fitted her to be a liaison between the world of private Catholic education, with its loyal supporters, and the booming business of education in California. Vital in preparing for the oral history was Sister Catharine Julie's offer to the interviewer of the vivid *McCarthy Cunningham Memoirs*, written by Mary McCarthy Cunningham. That account provided a touching introduction to the daughter and an opening framework for looking at a Catholic girlhood.

From the first meeting, and tour of the mansion, to the last, with a fine lunch in town, Sister Catharine Julie was always a charming hostess. I had a room of my own, really, for doing the research, and then for doing the interviews. A guest room across from college offices, it had a view of the front lawns and the fountain, and the splendid old trees and Ralston grounds. While comfortably furnished, it was sparingly so. Only the scale and appointments of the bathroom, and the huge windows, reminded one that this was the second floor of the building that housed the grand ballroom of the Ralston days. It was an appealing combination and a peaceful place.

Sister Catharine Julie was careful in her reading of the transcript, which she received in late March 1983, making very few changes while going through it systematically. It was a task--among others--to complete before a long-awaited trip to Europe. And it was completed only a day or so before departure. On the day it was delivered, I suggested to Sister Catharine Julie that her old friend Norman Cousins might be a good person to ask for a brief introduction, and she was delighted. We are pleased, and happy for Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham, that this project has come to such a satisfactory completion.

For further reading, scholars are referred to documents deposited in The Bancroft Library relating to Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, which closed in 1980; to a 1976 interview with Sister Mary Patrick Harney, retired (1968) president of Dominican College, San Rafael; to interviews in the Donated Oral Histories Collection holdings that were made with Jacqueline Wexler of Webster College, and Father Daniel Hesburg, University of Notre Dame, part of an oral history project from the University of Indiana on the college presidency in the 1960s. Relating to the College of Notre Dame, catalogs representative of the years from 1952 to 1984, and brochures and clippings have been deposited. The Mary McCarthy Memoirs, and the William H. McCarthy Scrapbooks, and Recollections of April 18, 1906 will be available in the Special Collections Room of the College of Notre Dame Library. The tapes of the interviews for this memoir are in The

Bancroft Library, as well as the interview with Sister Mary Dominica McNamee, in which is discussed the selection of Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham as president, teaching Latin, buildings on the Belmont campus, and the *aggiornamento* and changes in the Order.

We wish to thank the Society of California Pioneers for making this oral history possible. And for their help, we extend our thanks to Sister Mary Dominica McNamee, Karen Roach, recently retired secretary to Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham, and Sister Mary Wilma King, reference librarian, Notre Dame College Library.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in recent California history. The office is under the direction of Willa K. Baum, division head, and under the administrative supervision of James D. Hart, the director of The Bancroft Library.

Suzanne B. Riess
Senior Editor-Interviewer

1 November 1983
Regional Oral History Office
486 The Bancroft Library
University of California at Berkeley

I FAMILY, CHILDHOOD, AND EARLY EDUCATION

[Interview 1: September 16, 1982]##

Family Background and Parish Life

Riess: You were born in San Francisco, October 22, 1910.

Cunningham: That's right, at Children's Hospital.

Riess: From reading your mother's journal I know you were the first child and very, very much loved.*

Cunningham: Yes, because I was the first little one in the family. Her only living brother at the time was not married. On my father's side, his sister had married but had no children, and his brother had not married at that time. Since I was rather lively and quite well, I was able to visit different aunts and uncles and be a happy companion for the older members of the family when they what we would term now "babysat."

In the first six months of my life we lived in a flat on the corner of Liberty and Guerrero Street. In fact, my father had rented it six months before he was married, paid rent for it even before he was married. The people began to call it a mystery apartment because no lights were ever seen and nobody went in or out, but he wanted to be sure he had that flat for

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##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 248.

*Memoirs of Mary McCarthy (Mrs. John Francis) Cunningham, will be available in the Special Collections Room of the College of Notre Dame Library.

Cunningham: Mother. We lived there for six months, but there were so many steps that Mother found it a little difficult, and so we moved to Guerrero and Twenty-third to a flat owned by an old San Franciscan, a Dr. Charles Jones, who had built three big homes for his girls, one for each of them, and one had been turned into flats. We were really diagonally across the street from our grandmother, who lived on Guerrero near Twenty-fourth.

We were right near St. James Church and at that time it was a very nice part of town. Families who knew one another from way back had settled there, many of them of course from an Irish background, though not necessarily themselves having come from Ireland. It was a parish that was a very warm family parish. St. James Church was a focal point for so many of the people who were Catholics and living in that area. We were just a half block from this church and there was a school for boys and a school for girls. I went to Notre Dame [de Namur], which was down on Dolores Street.

Many of those people had become very close because of the earthquake, the fire and earthquake of 1906, and there had been a Mission Relief Association for the people who had lived in that area. Not that the homes were actually damaged, but at the time of the earthquake and the fire they didn't know what would happen so they had had to leave the area. During the early days of the reconstruction of the city, many of the citizens who lived in that area and were stalwart citizens for a good number of months had had to cook out in the middle of the street. The whole city was affected by the lack of water and among many other problems, the residents couldn't have lights on in the homes. I remember a picture my mother had of people actually at stoves down in the middle of Guerrero Street where they would join in what would be known today as potluck suppers.

My uncle has a memoir of his recollections of that period written later than the actual time, but it is interesting from his point of view.*

Riess: He described your grandmother pointing an accusing finger at your uncle, saying, "See what your--"

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*Recollections of April 18, 1906, by William H. McCarthy, will be available in the Special Collections Room of the College of Notre Dame Library.

Cunningham: [laughs] "Your language!" Oh, I remember him telling that story, that he was quite descriptive about how he felt, and she said, "That's what is causing this [earthquake], the language you are using!"

Riess: He also referred to the fact that the family was responsible for caring for a lot of the church artifacts at that time.

Cunningham: Yes, that was true. He had promised the pastor that he would be responsible for taking the sacred vessels, and the special things that were there to a safe place, and for that purpose had commandeered a truck and loaded the things on so that they could take them up to Twin Peaks where many of the people of that area went--the slopes of Twin Peaks--for safety.

Riess: Did that actually happen?

Cunningham: I think they did it because they didn't know at the immediate time that the fire would not come up as far as they actually lived, near Twenty-fourth. I think it stopped at Twentieth, but that's pretty scary.

Riess: Do you know these things because the family talked about them a lot?

Cunningham: Oh, yes. Mother was one who loved to talk about events, and because the family was in a special way sort of prominent in earlier San Francisco politics, and we knew many of the prominent people in the city and had some of them in our home, and in my uncle's in particular. Since he was very active in San Francisco affairs, we just grew up knowing and hearing about and talking to people who were a part of the early 1900s. Not that I knew all of them personally--children were to be seen and not heard--but I listened a lot when guests came. When guests were at the home, too, I would be allowed to pass the preliminary refreshments around and then say good night and go off.

Riess: You described hearing about people cooking out in the street after the fire. Was that a society that had any class distinctions? They were all of Irish background, or otherwise?

Cunningham: Remember, I wasn't even born then, but I would assume that they were all members of the Mission area, and there was a major tragedy and they were helping each other.

Riess: I wondered whether, if it hadn't been for the tragedy, they would have been likely to be potlucking together.

Cunningham: From my own family--from recollections--I know that, for example, on the street in which I lived, lived the neighborhood doctor, Dr. Charles E. Jones, whose own father was one of the earliest pioneer doctors in the state and is historically noted for his work up in the Mother Lode country. That family was a rather large family. And the McCarthys and the Cunninghams and others in the area, they happened also to be members of the same parish church, so there was a dual connection. Monsignor Joseph Munier, now retired, a former pastor of the Mt. Carmel Church of Redwood City and a very prominent San Francisco area priest, was also living in that same block on Guerrero Street and that family was friends. So it really wasn't class distinction. It just was a neighborhood in which that type of family lived.

Riess: Your grandmother went to a Notre Dame school in Boston.

Cunningham: Yes, she was born in Boston. Her family had come over from Ireland via New Brunswick, if I remember the story correctly, and then came down into the Boston area where she was born. If I remember correctly then later they moved to Charlestown where the sisters of Notre Dame de Namur had a school at Roxbury. She went to the Notre Dame de Namur School at Roxbury as a child. Interestingly, I had an occasion much later in life to visit the convent and the school and told the sisters at that time that my grandmother had been a pupil in the 1800s.

Riess: So that would make it a family tradition to seek out a school that would be run by the sisters of Notre Dame de Namur?

Cunningham: It also happened that my grandmother's sister, who had a little girl, died when that child was six months old, and her father (my grandmother's brother-in-law) had died six months before the child was born. So my grandmother raised this little girl--and this was again before my mother was born--raised her in the home, and she attended Notre Dame in San Francisco and later on became a sister of Notre Dame. So that by the time I grew up, this cousin, a second cousin of mine, had been for some years a sister of Notre Dame.

The sisters of Notre Dame had a wonderful national and international reputation for education, and so rather than send me to the local convent school which was on Guerrero near Twenty-fourth, I went to the sisters of Notre Dame. My mother also spent a year at Notre Dame after she had finished state normal school, because she was too young to go out into the labor market at the time, and so she went for a postgraduate year, even after her normal school training, to Notre Dame Convent.

Riess: Was there a difference in the cost to attend the parish school and the Notre Dame school?

Cunningham: I do not think so, though a private school always is higher in tuition than a parochial school.

Riess: The Notre Dame schools were ranked with secular private schools like Burke's, or Hamlin's?

Cunningham: As far as I know, there was no specific ranking of private schools. Since our Notre Dame Order is an international one, our schools were noted both nationally, and internationally. The other order, Sisters of the Dominican Order--they were at that time called the German Dominicans--were not that well known to my family, even though they were in the area. But there was in my family a tradition of Notre Dame, and I think Notre Dame's educational background, even to this day, has had something special for us.

Riess: Were the Catholic schools full then?

Cunningham: As a child, the schoolyard seemed full. I remember the classrooms were certainly full and I would think that in the light of today, that was maximum plus. For now, we are much more restrictive in the numbers that we take in those schools, not because we are trying to be so private in that sense, but because it would seem to have a better one-to-one basis than the numbers that the earlier classes seemed to hold. And yet we all got a wonderful education despite that. I suppose the discipline and the training we had at home made us much more conducive to learning than just to playing at school--not that we didn't play, too, at the recreation times.

Riess: Then was the population homogeneous?

Cunningham: I would say yes. In 1917, when I went to school, many of the students, of course, were from the immediate area, but I knew students who came from across the city. Town wasn't as widespread as it is today, but I can remember a student with whom I was friendly, and with whom I stayed overnight once in awhile, living in Forest Hill district. (We had a lot in Forest Hill. There was a question we might have moved over there later on, but as it happened, we didn't.) But they would have come that distance to go to Notre Dame because Notre Dame has had an excellent reputation. For the most part, they were girls from the middle class families who would have come.

Cunningham: There was a boarding school also at that time, and so for children whose parents for one reason or another, single parents, or there had been a death in the family, would want the child taken care of more than just during the school hours, there was a boarding school in both the elementary and high school. That was a tradition that had come from the European background of the educational program, where you had a boarding and a day school. That plan had come from our foundation school in San Jose. At almost all of our schools in California where we had adequate facilities for residence, we did maintain both a boarding and a day school.

Riess: The day pupils like yourself, would you go home at lunch?

Cunningham: There was opportunity to have lunch there, and I can remember on many occasions staying there; Mother wanted me to have a hot lunch. But as I grew older, I just didn't like being confined to sitting in a refectory, as they called it, and I just begged to be able to go home. So I was allowed to take the streetcar home and then I had to walk back to school. It was only eight blocks, but I wanted to get back and play with the girls. We had, as I remember, about an hour and a half at noon, and I wanted not to have to sit in a regimented fashion with the boarders. It was possible to take lunch with them, but I did it rarely.

Riess: Your mother was home because she had a younger child?

Cunningham: Yes, but she was very involved in programs and clubs and organizations in San Francisco, and we always had somebody to take care of the home. There was always someone there, but normally she was there at noontime for me, and later on for my sister, too.

Riess: Mothers these days would feel enormously constrained and put upon to have to be at home! [laughter]

Cunningham: Yes. Oh, no, she would be there. As I grew older--of course, when I got into high school, then I could take a lunch to school or go to a nearby delicatessen on occasion, and get a snack and come back to the schoolyard.

Riess: Can you put yourself back into that time and remember whether you were interested or curious about public schools?

Cunningham: As I came to school, we passed Mission High School. I would come down Dolores Street when I was in grammar and high school. That was the only school that I really knew, and it is only a block from Notre Dame. I know there was an

Cunningham: elementary school nearby, Horace Mann Grammar School, that my mother had attended, down off of the Valencia area. I'm not exactly sure what street that was on.

But for the most part, I would say I just went to school at Notre Dame. I didn't really know any of the other students, the girls who went to the public school. We played with those who were near us at home; I used to stay after school a lot because I played basketball and loved athletics. Then at home we were with family friends, except the Jones girls who were much older than I and who brought me to school when I was very young before I was able to go out on my own.

I don't remember that I had any feelings of being not with those students who were over in the school that I passed. It simply didn't enter my head, I don't think, and yet a number in my family had had public school education, as well as going to Catholic schools.

Riess: It wasn't the case that you all went by in your uniforms and there would have been a noticing of differences.

Cunningham: None whatsoever, no. There was never any kind of feeling of being different, really, even though we were in uniform. We simply took it--that's the way we were, and we weren't thinking, "Why didn't we wear colored dresses?" It just never entered my head. I don't know how you explain that now in the light of always wanting to be like your peers. In a sense we were, because those of us who were friends all wore the uniforms. And don't think we didn't fuss about the fact that we had to wear cotton stockings! As we got into high school, we of course wanted the silk stockings, but we had to wear dark-colored stockings. Now, that kind of thing bothered us, but that was within our own group, and not because the students in the public schools got to wear whatever they wore. It just didn't enter our heads at all.

Riess: Were there Mexican children in the schools, do you remember, or Chinese?

Cunningham: I have no recollection of anything but a very homogeneous grouping of students.

Riess: Including Italian Catholics?

Cunningham: Actually, we didn't have the feeling, or I didn't as a child, of a nationality. We mention now that there were many of the Irish background because the names were Irish, and I can remember several girls whose names had a French background

Cunningham: but they were American born. I don't remember any black students either in the elementary school or high school, but probably there weren't very many in that area at all at that time in San Francisco. I have talked about that subsequently, saying that I don't remember seeing any black people in that area at all.

As for the Orientals, they wouldn't have been there in school. They lived over in the Chinatown area where there was a Chinese school connected to Old St. Mary's. We had a Chinese houseboy for many years, different ones at different periods. It wasn't that the Chinese were being kept out of our school. It was that they weren't living in the Mission District, although [there were] other students who, as I mentioned earlier, did come from another part of town to Notre Dame. There must have been, I would presume, some of Italian background. I would have to look over the list of the names. But there was no race connection with us at all; we were just Notre Dame students, as I remember.

Riess: Mary McCarthy, the writer, was born in 1912. In her Memories of a Catholic Girlhood, she comments that in parochial school everything was a contest, to win, to skip a grade, "well adapted to a neighborhood of immigrant children with families bent on bettering themselves anyway." I thought that was interesting. Would you describe your neighborhood as a neighborhood of immigrants?

Cunningham: No, I was going just to say that we were really a third generation from the immigrants. Our family did not know any relatives who might still have been in Ireland. They had all come over to America apparently in the early 1800s. Part of the family on both sides (McCarthy and Cunningham) came to Boston, and then on both sides came out here to California. We have cousins in both the Boston, Connecticut area and the St. Paul area, so that there was actually no connection with anyone in Ireland. The word immigrant simply didn't enter our minds at all.

In reference to competition with the children and trying to raise your status, that again doesn't seem to enter into any recollection I have. We were probably, as I mentioned earlier, much more homogeneous in a middle class family group, many of whose parents had been involved in the building up of San Francisco in the earlier days and knew the people in the public arena, in the sports world, because my family was very involved in that, and in the business world. So we were much more involved with a good education and being a good

Cunningham: citizen and, of course, getting good grades so you could go on to college. But it wasn't because the other generation didn't have that in my family; they had had a good education and their parents also had had a very good education for their time.

First Communion and Traditions of Family Life

Riess: Do you remember your First Communion?

Cunningham: Yes, as a little girl in school that was one of the things for which we were first prepared. We were seven years old when we received First Communion, and although the parish in which I lived, St. James, of course, had a First Communion class, I did not go to that because I was in school down at Notre Dame. So I made my First Communion in Mission Dolores parish--not the Old Mission, but the smaller church that preceded the present basilica.

Riess: Oh, really?

Cunningham: Yes, there was an interim church, and it was before the basilica was built, but not in the Old Mission proper. But I made it in that parish because I was from a class from the Notre Dame School right across from the Old Mission. That was a very important day in the life of a little Catholic girl, her First Communion.

One of the things that I remember, as we had lined up in the garden (now that you mention this) to be ready to march over to the church, was the superior of the convent, a much beloved sister, Sister Berchmans Joseph, who herself was from the pioneer Murphy family from Mother Lode country. She had become a sister of Notre Dame many years before that. I remember that she stepped over and handed me a little prayer book. We had been a family friend of the sisters for many years because my cousin was one of the members of the community. I remember being handed a little white prayer book as I stood in line to go over to the church. That was just a loving little touch.

Of course, we have pictures of me with my white ribbon and the veil and so forth, and then I probably had a little luncheon at home. I don't remember any group pictures. If the school ever took one, I don't remember seeing it. The pastor of our parish church, Father Patrick Lynch, probably

Cunningham: came over to our home. He had baptized my mother and baptized me and my sister, and while I was not receiving First Communion in my own parish, he understood why because he was a long-time family friend and quite understanding of the fact that I went to a school in another parish.

Riess: Is it on your birthday, is that when your First Communion comes?

Cunningham: No, I think it was in May. I don't remember the date. It had nothing to do with a birthday. It was just that when you were around seven, that was the customary age. You were in the first grade and that was about the time that children were given the opportunity to make the First Communion and become a member of the parish group, able then to receive holy communion on Sundays when you attended church with your parents or with other children if you went to the parish Mass. I always went with my family. I rarely went to the children's Mass. We went as a family to a later Mass.

Riess: When you say "given the opportunity," that sounds like some might be considered to be mature enough and some not, but that's not really the case, is it?

Cunningham: That was usually the year. Now it's very different. They receive communion at different times according to the maturity perhaps, or the understanding of the child, but we started school in the later year when we were seven years old. Now they start at practically five-and-a-half! So maybe they are in the second grade now by the time they would be ready to receive their First Communion.

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Cunningham: The Church has to be sure that the child understands the difference when she goes to communion and receives the host that it is the body of our Lord Christ and not just a piece of ordinary bread. That has to be understood in terms that the child can understand, but yet in terms that make it different from the ordinary kind of bread that the child would have.

Riess: Were there any non-Catholics at the school?

Cunningham: I would presume there were.

Riess: Catechism seems like such a watershed point and something that you are all working up to.

Cunningham: Yes, perhaps in those days non-Catholics normally wouldn't have gone to those schools, although there was no restriction from the point of view of the school. It would be much more likely and, of course, I am sure that the greater majority in those schools would have been from Catholic families. But I am sure there wasn't any restriction per se.

Riess: Of course, now those schools are very, very desirable, in a way for different reasons.

Cunningham: Yes, indeed the reasons are different.

Riess: I am afraid I operate from my old stereotypes about the Irish Catholics. So I think of feasts and lengthy wakes and a lot of passion around birth, funerals, weddings, and so on.

Cunningham: This is nothing that I have recollection of at all. Because my maternal grandmother had been an invalid for a long period of time, many of the special parties--especially Thanksgiving, I suppose that's traditional--that was at grandmother's house. But that was only across the street and so the whole family would gather there. At Christmas, because there were children in my mother's home, then the other family members would come over to our home.

As for wakes, my mother had the feeling that a child should be preserved from the association with death, and I say that because when my grandmother died, I was immediately sent over to my aunt's home out in the Richmond district, so that I would not be, I suppose, bothered, troubled, upset by the death. As I remember, even hearing my mother speak later on, she had not been taken to many funerals, so there was never any history of our families having gone to what people call today Irish wakes.

But there was even a reticence about death, although I wasn't kept from my grandmother when she was sick and ill. But when she died, then I was taken away, sent over to my aunt's just to be away from it. Now, what transpired at the home--I would presume that the family came, and the family friends in the parish, because she had been a stalwart support of the parish for many years. Again because the family had a certain prominence in parish and public life, the death of the grandmother made a great difference with many people coming.

Riess: The time to honor the family.

Cunningham: Yes, but not in the sense of this Irish wake stereotype that you mentioned.

Riess: How old were you when your grandmother died?

Cunningham: About seven, and my sister was just an infant then. She had no recollection, of course, of our grandmother.

We had had a baby brother who had died as an infant, as you might have read in Mother's memoirs. His name was John Francis Cunningham, Jr. In fact, that is really the first recollection I have age-wise, because I was three, and when we're talking about wakes, it was a trauma to me of his not being around any more; that is really my first recollection. He was born when I was three and died within two months, at home. He had a blockage some place in the esophagus. (Today, of course, this problem could be taken care of medically.) Mother and Daddy had to watch him just simply literally starve to death. I loved the baby dearly. I have no recollection that he was sick because babies are always in cribs and he was in the crib. I can remember my father taking me out for a walk on the day he died. When we came back to our home--and I have a vivid recollection, this is my first remembrance--I wanted to go over to the crib and see baby brother, and he wasn't there.

Mother told me later on--I don't remember her saying this to me at the time--but she told me that God had taken the baby. Now, today, psychologically they don't want people to say that any more because that puts God in a very bad light [laughs], that He'd take somebody, but that was what Mother said, that God had taken the baby. That remained with me so long that when three years later my sister, Mary Frances, was born and I was taken to the hospital to see her, Mother said it was just so heart-wrenching to hear me say, "Is God going to take this baby, too?" She assured me that he would not and for that [laughs] I thank Him!

So that's my first recollection really of something special happening, and that was at age three, but it was a trauma. And I know I always was asking Mother, "Could we have another baby?" [laughs] So they worked on it and we got another baby, my sister, and God has spared her happily for many, many years up to today.

Riess: There were times of great sickness and death.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, but Mother had had those in her own girlhood when her father had died when she was only four and then two of her brothers died as very young men--I think that's possibly a reason that she didn't want sorrow to come into our lives, because it had been in her life as a young girl, when her

Cunningham: father had died so young at forty-two and her mother had then to take over the family and the family business. I think she mentions, too, that from that time on, my grandmother never wore anything but black or gray or lavender. I do remember that my grandmother wore those shades. Of course, as an invalid she would have been in her robe a lot of times in her chair by the window--that is the way I remember her.

But Mother wouldn't have wanted what was a sorrow to her as a young girl to be carried on, and so even when her mother died, I don't remember that there was the excessive mourning that one reads about. We simply carried on and had beautiful memories of the person, but didn't make the family or the home a gloomy one.

Friends and Social Interests of the Cunninghams

Riess: Actually, that freed your mother and father to begin a kind of social life that you probably have more memories of.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, they had very many dinner parties at home and entertained often because they were both involved in clubs and civic affairs. Also, as I have said, my uncle was prominent in many ways with the family shoe manufacturing business, and in baseball as president of the Pacific Coast League, in the civic business as a supervisor, and the education business working to help develop the University of San Francisco.

Riess: I think you should describe your uncle. We have had a lot of references to him and I know he was very prominent.

Cunningham: William H. McCarthy was the only brother who had survived in a family of the four children, of which my mother was the only girl. The other two, Rob and Dan, I never knew because they died as young men, one at eighteen and one at twenty-one. [They] were very outstanding young men in their own educational background. They went to the public schools in the area, Horace Mann and then to what was then Boys High School and then one of them had gone to Sacred Heart and one to St. Peter's. (Uncle Billy had gone to St. Peter's High School and then to Boys High School, which ultimately became Lowell.) The two boys, Rob and Dan, one had then gone on to St. Mary's College, which at that time was run by the Christian Brothers, in San Francisco. But both of them died as young men.

Cunningham: So Will then was the stalwart one of the McCarthy family and a handsome man-about-town who had many, many friends. He did not marry until much later in life, so he was the debonair Uncle Billy Boy, as my sister and I called him, who lived at the family home on Guerrero Street for awhile after we had moved over to Dolores Street, then moved down to the Palace Hotel where he had a suite for many years until he married.

So our home was the focal point for any parties or dinners that Mother and Daddy would have, as was Uncle's suite in the Palace Hotel. There were the religious groups, the Knights of Columbus that the men belonged to, and the Elks Club, the Olympic Club. Uncle Billy belonged to the Bohemian Club also. Mother, Daddy and Uncle belonged to the San Francisco Club and were very prominent in that and in the beginning of the San Francisco Museum of Art, the De Young Museum at the opening of which Uncle was the main speaker. She was a founder of the St. Elizabeth Infant Hospital Auxiliary and on the board there for many years. She also belonged to the Philatheia Club in San Francisco. Daddy was a great golfer, and belonged to Lakeside Country Club. So there were all kinds of social events. Mother played bridge with several groups, also.

Now, in none of this did Mother neglect the family. I can remember Mother was always dressing up to go out to something in the afternoon but, as I said, there was somebody there always when I would come home. If Mother wasn't there, the girl who took care of the house for awhile was there. And as I was older, it didn't matter. When I came home from school, I would bring my sister home and we were there together.

In the evenings when Daddy and Mother would be going out we would see them dress up, and it was never that we felt left out. That was just something that big people did. We had the birthday parties. We had children over for our parties, so that there was that kind of entertainment. We were always entertaining or being entertained by family and friends, too. We had summer vacations together and, as you remember, we went to Europe a couple of times, as children, and had three months of travel each of those two years. It was incredible when we think of it now, the way we were able to travel, and what we saw, and yet we took it in stride to have had all these opportunities.

Riess: Your mother's life worked well because, as she said, "We were never a family to penny pinch, first of all."

Cunningham: That's right. It wasn't that there weren't problems. When my grandmother had to turn over the business to my uncle, he had to get in and take over the big factory that my grandfather

Mary McCarthy Cunningham

John Francis Cunningham

William Henry McCarthy

Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham's parents, and her uncle.

Cunningham: had founded, and those who had run it after my grandfather's death had sort of let it go down until Uncle was old enough to take over. It was the Buckingham Boot & Shoe Manufacturing Company. But we never thought about problems with money. Now, that sounds strange today, but we lived well--not lavishly, although it sounds lavish when you think of the trips to Europe and some of the things that we had. But it was because we were given everything and, of course, things lasted well in those days.

Riess: Your mother was not harnessed to the kitchen. She wasn't doing that sort of thing.

Cunningham: She was a wonderful cook though. She wasn't harnessed to the kitchen, but even when we had the formal parties at home, and even though we had a houseboy, Mother would do, because she wanted to, the cooking of whatever the specialty was. The houseboy was trained in everything else. Mother was a very fine cook, although she told me she hardly knew how to boil water when she married my father, so she really had had to learn. We had family on my father's side who were excellent cooks and Mother learned a lot of things from them. But she had help around the house, which made it easier for her to do the work in the civic clubs and the Catholic organizations that she wanted to help and be a part of.

Riess: What did she look like? Did she look like you?

Cunningham: Did I ever show you a picture? You have never seen a picture of my mother? I'll bring that at our next round. A cousin who visited me yesterday said, "Oh, you look like your mother." Now, I never thought that as a young girl, because I was supposed to look like my father. That was what people would say, the Cunningham side of the family, and my sister Mary Frances like the McCarthy side. But the people who remember my mother as she grew older say I've grown to look more like her as I grow older, too. She was a very handsome and a very striking looking woman in that she held herself very erect. As a child I remember that she was always saying, "Catharine, sit up straight."

She was very proper. She was born at the edge of the Victorian period, so she dressed as a lady dressed. You wore your housedress in the house and you dressed up when you went out. Even when you went shopping for groceries you wore gloves. That sounds pretty stuffy today, but that was part of the generation in which she grew up. When you went downtown, you were dressed up, and when you went to parties, you wore your party clothes.

Cunningham: My father was a great sportsman. My father had done everything in sports, I think, except probably football. He was a famous handball player in his youthful days in San Francisco, and he was an early member of the Olympic Club, in fact was probably one of their foundation stones for many years. He belonged to the Corinthian Yacht Club, which was the yacht club across the bay. He never had any boat, but he liked sailing. He ran the Dipsea race many times. We still read about that run today. He was an avid golfer. He began the practice of having a special St. Patrick's Day golf tournament out at the Lakeside Golf and Country Club. He was also a fine swimmer.

So there were all the athletics and the events that took his attention. Mother wasn't interested in sports. She walked. She belonged to a couple of bridge groups. Her interests were much more literary than my father's. She loved to go to the lectures and the cultural events in San Francisco. She loved the work at the beginnings of the museum in San Francisco, and music, symphonies, the concerts that were held. They were both very great opera lovers. Even as a child, my grandmother used to take her to hear the greats of the day that to me, of course, are only names--[Luisa] Tetrazinni and [Nellie] Melba and [Enrico] Caruso, all of those greats.

She had been brought up herself going with her mother, and later on she went with my uncle and father, and with friends to the opera and to concerts. To this day my sister has two season tickets to the opera and has kept up that tradition, so I have many opportunities today to go with her to these events.

There was a variety of events and interests in our family, and we were always very great readers. I mentioned that Mother was much more involved in going to lectures. Of course, she could go to those in the afternoon, whereas that wasn't exactly what my father would have had in mind. He was doing his work at the Crocker Bank and then later in the evening, before he came home, he would go down to the Olympic Club and have his swim and the steam bath. Then come home and we would have a late dinner. That was the usual, and then when they were going out, of course, again it would be going out late to dinner.

Riess: Do you remember dinner table conversations?

Cunningham: Oh, yes. Daddy would bring home from the downtown area the various and sundry events in the business world and so forth, the politics of the day. We were very involved in hearing about what went on and, of course, that would have been from his associations in the business world and in the club world to which he belonged.

Cunningham: Both men in our family, as I can say, my father and my uncle, were very compatible. They were very different but extremely good friends as well as brothers-in-law which was marvelous for the family because there was never--there might have been some difference of opinion and it could be loud but it was never acrimonious. It was always just a mode of thinking and Mother would get in her opinion very forcefully and Mary Frances and I for the most part were listeners. This was at the family table. The conversations were never trivial.

Now, of course, Uncle wasn't with us all of the time. It sounds it when I'm saying that, but he came as often as--we would have had him all the time and, of course, he came more often before he was married than later. Of course, he would ask about our schooling and how we got along.

On report card days, I brought the report card home first to Mother and Mother would show it to Daddy. Fortunately, Mary Frances and I got good report cards, so there was never a serious problem. Once in awhile we had problems--I had problems--with some homework, and although we didn't discuss homework exactly at the table, my father was a very, very good mathematician as well as a financier. So Daddy would help sometimes with the homework. Mother would have helped some too if I needed some guidance there and I presume the same thing happened with Mary Frances, too.

I don't remember any arguments at the table except when they talked about politics--who was going to be up for election here, who was going to be the supervisorial candidate for this, and whether this would be a good thing, and the people who wanted Daddy to help and support them, because he had a certain influence because of his outgoing manner and his warmth with people. He was a very fine PR person. So both sides of areas would want him to be one of their supporters because people did listen to him. Now, he didn't always, I guess, back the man who won, but that's the way of life.

Uncle Bill McCarthy's Roles in San Francisco Business, Sports, and War Relief

Cunningham: When Uncle was there, of course, it was always, it seemed to me, politics and business, but in a very open discussion. [There] was not anything that was not said in front of Mary Frances and me. We heard everything. We didn't interrupt; we listened. As I said, there were no trivialities really,

Cunningham: but probably the things that would have been considered trivial were talked over cocktails ahead of time and then when you sat down at the table and were served and that sort of thing, you were more confined to the four, five, or six.

At dinner parties, as my sister and I gradually were allowed to sit down at the table ourselves, other than just greeting the guests during the cocktails and maybe passing an hors d'oeuvres or so and then going up to our part of the house--when Mary Frances and I were able to sit down with the older people, as we got older, it was fascinating because there were so many attorneys, people from the bank, and from the business world who were family friends.

Now, we didn't normally go to every dinner party our parents were invited to. There were some homes to which we as children were, of course, invited. They were to very close friends. So again that was exciting, to go to some of the homes to which we went. Many times, of course, there were parties and dinners that Mother and Daddy went to that we didn't go to at all. But we would hear about who was saying what around town about the various things that were happening and, of course, remember it was a period in which San Francisco was still rebuilding and building.

Our family became involved in sports because on my father's side we had a very outstanding young man in our family, my father's nephew, who was almost like a big brother to me, Bill Cunningham. He became ultimately one of the New York Giants in the 1920s, at the time when the New York Yankees had Babe Ruth on their team. So on my father's side, from the point of view of Bill Cunningham and the teams that he joined or was encouraged to become a member of, as they did in those days, and then going up to the Giants, we were involved in all that excitement.

Then William McCarthy became very involved in the Pacific Coast League, in the Mission Baseball Club, and the Seals. As a prominent member of the baseball group, he of course had a box at the old Seals Stadium which, as I remember, was down around Sixteenth and Valencia and Mission--in that area. The sports world and the events of the sports world entered into our family discussions. I would go very frequently down to games on Sunday and sit in his box there all dressed up in my best. I can remember Mr. Ghirardelli, one of the famous Ghirardellis, whose box was right next to Uncle's, and Charlie Strub, again still a famous name now down in the Santa Anita Race Track area. As a little girl I would be sitting there

Cunningham: dressed in my Sunday best at the baseball game [laughs]--and not with Mother or Mary Frances or Daddy. I was just taken there by Uncle Billy Boy. He just loved to have me there and I loved to go.

Riess: Your uncle and your father had been involved in reform politics in San Francisco?

Cunningham: Yes, Uncle particularly. Uncle had been a supervisor--I would have to check with the records for the dates. Because he had, as a young man, gotten into the Mission Relief Association with James Rolph and the group that had tried to help after the fire and earthquake in the rebuilding of the area, he was very well known, and he was a wonderful speaker. Not only was he a handsome, striking man (and I must bring pictures so that you will see) he had a charisma in his speech. He was called on many, many times as a toastmaster in public and private financial drives, and other events too in San Francisco. He himself had been a great reader, so he had a superb literary bent. He was a wonderful orator, not only how he said it, but what he would say. So he was well known for being an outstanding public speaker. As a supervisor, of course, he had done a great deal for the city. He was also a fire commissioner in San Francisco.

One of his political defeats, and he did not have too many in life, was when he was asked to run for assessor. But an assessor's role was a very difficult one and Billy McCarthy was known as a man who was as straight as an arrow and perhaps that was not in the minds of some who wouldn't have wanted [laughs] too straight a person. So he did not win.

Because of his role in politics and in the political arena--he was a Democrat--he became the northern California chairman for the Roosevelt drive for the presidency and became well known in politics along the national lines. As a result of that, he became postmaster of San Francisco in the thirties.

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Riess: Did you mother go to Mass every morning?

Cunningham: No, we were not a daily Mass-going family. We, of course, went on Sundays and feast days. As close as we lived to the church, it wasn't--I guess Mass was pretty early and because many of the evenings were late, it just was not in our practice, no.

Riess: Your uncle was a Democrat. I suppose that was the family politics?

Cunningham: Interestingly enough, my father was a registered Republican. Now, we have to remember he was with a firm, Crocker National Bank, and the businessmen, I guess, had other ideas. He always said, "You never know what one does when you get into that voting booth!" [laughter]

As I said, there were differences in political opinion, of course, although basically the Cunninghams and McCarthys agreed on most of the issues and items and the people who were involved in the politics of the day.

Riess: I see that your uncle headed something called the Catholic War Relief in World War I.

Cunningham: Yes, Archbishop Hanna, who was the Catholic leader in San Francisco at that time, asked Uncle to take over one of the drives, and I know that he did a great deal for the Catholic War Relief and also for the Red Cross. But it was in the Catholic War Relief when the archbishop, I think, said, "We are trying to raise $25,000," and my uncle said, "I'm not going to do anything for $25,000. I'll go in and help you raise a quarter of a million." They thought he was crazy, but with his charisma, his dynamism, and his push, and with the work of the rest of his family and friends who supported what he was going to do, in that particular drive he raised a quarter of a million dollars, which was simply astounding in those days.

Later on in life, not connected with the war, he did a lot for the University of San Francisco, then the St. Ignatius College, but we can talk about that at another time.

He pushed to help the war relief program overseas. Of course, I was only a little girl. [laughs] The only thing I remember really about the war was having a nurse's outfit to play in and the many parades in San Francisco, because the Crocker Bank was right at the corner of Market and Montgomery and my father's office was there. A special platform was always put up at the bank for parade viewing, so our family had prime seats. I can remember as a child sitting up on this platform at the Crocker Bank and watching, for example, the parade that brought General Pershing to San Francisco, the King and Queen of Belgium, and the parades that would honor the soldiers as they returned. There was always the desire to be there to see what San Francisco was doing for, and really celebrating with, those who had been prominent and international figures in world events.

Cultural Life, the Museums, and Golden Gate Park

Riess: You make San Francisco sound very small town.

Cunningham: I suppose in a sense it was, and yet it wasn't small town in that we were doing something just for San Francisco; it was for the people who came from across the seas or from across the country. San Francisco was the place to which they came. So we really weren't that small if they had to come to San Francisco! [laughs]

Riess: No, I don't mean that. I mean it is just that you have such a perspective on the entire city and that your sense of it was that you were living right in the middle of it.

Cunningham: I suppose we were, really. You have people who are in business in downtown San Francisco. You have people who are involved in politics and the politics of downtown San Francisco in the interests of the cultural building up of San Francisco--and I say building up because there had to be a lot done following World War I and the development of the city and the spreading out of the interests in the fine arts. Now that the world had been made safe for democracy, so to speak, the city could continue its own pursuits.

Riess: The interest in fine arts--we have a lot of oral histories documenting the participation of the strong German Jewish families in San Francisco in developing the art museums and the symphony and so on. Do you remember being aware of that whole other contributing culture per se?

Cunningham: I remember, of course, in the sense that I mentioned in the De Young Museum. My mother and father belonged and were part of the organizers with a Madame Cecile Sorbier of the San Francisco Club of which Mr. De Young, Michael De Young, was the founder. We have pictures showing one of the famous luncheons that was held in San Francisco to raise money for the museum, and Mother was one of the committee members. My uncle is shown seated next to Mr. De Young with Miss Cecile Sorbier and her mother, Madame Sorbier (I just remember those names) on the other side. I would have to have somebody identify a lot of the names there. So that was from the point of view of the culture, of bringing an art museum to San Francisco.

There had been, I presume, and I can remember Mother talking about it again as a child, the events that took place culturally, I guess, at the Mechanics Pavillion. Of course, all that had gone down in the fire and earthquake and I don't remember anything about it except hearing about it.

Cunningham: The music, of course--when the opera house was built in the thirties--I think it was completed in '32, we're celebrating a half a century of it now--the family was involved in that.

Riess: The Sterns and the Haases and those families--

Cunningham: To go back now to my father's business life, he had really two big jobs--positions--in his life. The first was with the Levi Strauss firm. So he was a very close associate, although he was in a managerial sense in the accounting and the business office of the firm of Levi Strauss in the early days, and the Sterns and the Haases and the Koshlands knew him very, very well. In fact, some of my sister's family treasures now in our home--in her home in San Francisco, her apartment--are from those families at the time of the wedding of my father and mother. So he was involved in the business world as a young man with the Levi Strauss firm for whom he worked for twenty-five years.

Then the next position, he was (quote) "won over" by the Crocker family to work in the safe deposit department of which he became the manager in San Francisco at Crocker Bank. This was all before he married, too. He began when he was a young man, very young, twenty-five. I suppose he would have been maybe forty when he went to the Crocker Bank.

So he knew those families, and because the Levi Strauss and the families that you mentioned were a very close family, and my father had worked with him, the fact that he was of Irish descent and a Catholic made no difference. They were very friendly with him and very good to him in their recollections and remembrances of how he served their family in his early days as a young man, and the same with the Charles W. Crocker family later on. So when there were the events that were involved in the beginnings of the museum and of the opera house, this is something I remember the family talked about and we participated in.

I remember the opening of the De Young Museum. In fact, one of the nice pictures we have in our family is a darling little picture of my sister as a child taken right there by the plaque because my uncle gave the principal address at the opening of the De Young Museum.

When you talked about the war relief, I remember as a little girl hearing John McCormack sing in Pacific Auditorium because he came to sing for the Red Cross. Although I did not go, of course, as a child to all of the big concerts that Mother and Daddy would have gone to, they wanted me to hear the famous John McCormack. So I remember hearing him as a child in a concert. In fact, we still have the program some place among our memorabilia.

Riess: Do you remember when the De Young opened, the art collection?

Cunningham: Oh, it was fantastic because one of the things then that we would do very often on Sundays would be to go out to the museum. Mother, as I said, loved things very, very much like the culture and so on and Daddy did, but of course he was an athlete, so he very often on Sundays, in fact, practically every Sunday, would go out golfing.

So Mother would take Mary Frances and me and we would go out to the museum and there we would have lunch. We would have a lunch out in the gardens of the park, after we had seen the museum, and as I grew older and was able to drive out there, then we would go out to the Lakeside Golf and Country Club for dinner. I still today can go to certain parts of the museum (not the same parts that they were in when I was a child) and see pictures that I remember looking at as a child. I was really brought up to go to the museum frequently.

Not so much to the Steinhart Aquarium. We weren't into the natural history, although that was there when I was a little girl, and I remember the section that had the wild animals pictured in their habitat and that's, of course, still there, a very famous thing.

The museum was simply a part of my life, and interestingly enough my sister is a volunteer for the museum group. She has followed the tradition of being a part of that cultural part of the San Francisco in both the Legion of Honor and the De Young Museum. The museum, of course, has done marvelously in its collections and its spread. Of course, that whole Asian collection and the whole Asian wing is new. And I remember some of the band concerts out in that lovely grove there.

Riess: As you describe it, it's a livable town. You can go out to the park and out to the beach.

Cunningham: Yes, I mentioned that my father was very interested in sports and athletics, and one of the things that he wanted was for my sister and me to be strong and healthy. Of course, since I was six years older than Mary Frances, I had a six-year head start on walking to Golden Gate Park with him.

Riess: Oh!

Cunningham: Yes, "oh" is right. I can remember that Mother and Mary Frances would take a streetcar and meet us out at the Beach Chalet where we would have luncheon or perhaps a picnic at the beach. But I got to walk, or I suppose you would say he would be mildly jogging and I would be--I remember saying, "Daddy,

Cunningham: I'm tired!" People would come along, because he was well known all over the city really, and they'd say, "Hello, Jack, do you want a ride?" And I'd be dying to be picked up in the car! "No, We're on our way." Or I'd say, "Daddy, I want a drink of water," and he'd point down to some water in one of the lakes. "You can have a drink of water there."

I can remember even him taking me up on what was called Corbett Road, and that's up by Twin Peaks, and for a little tyke, to be dragged up [laughs], to hike up Twin Peaks was no mean task, but he loved it and I was a companion to him when I was a little girl in that way.

Then as he became much more dedicated to golf, I would drive him out to the golf links as a young girl later in high school and college and then go about whatever I was going to do with Mother and Mary Frances during the day. Then we would meet out at Lakeside Golf and Country Club for dinner on Sunday nights--that was one of the things--or downtown San Francisco at Olympic Club when women could only go in the evening.

Riess: So you had a really kind of privileged relationship with your father. I wondered if you were his confidante.

Cunningham: I don't think so. Of course, there was such a difference in age. Daddy was older when he married, so that there was a difference in age for that kind of confidante. It would be more family things, sports, not so much about banking per se did he talk to me, although I always knew that when I was downtown, if I ran out of money I could go down to what my sister and I used to blithely call "my father's bank." We would go down and touch Daddy for some funds! [laughter] It was right in the center of wherever I had to do shopping.

Both Mary Frances and I took music as children and so that was another thing we would have to do--not with a great deal of heart might I say--perform for family and guests. Piano and singing. I had taken singing and I love to sing, but I just never liked to perform. Strangely enough, I loved to act on the stage, but singing was just a different matter and I took singing. Mary Frances was a much better pianist than I and it was because she was much more diligent and certainly had more talent than I. I, I should say, dragged my feet when I took piano. I was probably dragging my fingers more! [laughter] But that was another thing that we did at home, too. Daddy played the mandolin, Mother played the piano, and we would have sing alongs very often.

Riess: Did you have dancing classes?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, Mary Frances and I both took dancing as children--ballet, not toe dancing. I was always anxious to be in what was called Peggy O'Neill's classes, but I went to another dancing teacher who was much more conservative in the type of dancing that she [taught]. It was ballet rather than toe dancing, that kind of ballet dancing.

Daddy was a very fine dancer. He and Mother went, of course, to parties and dances. Then when I grew older, he took me to a couple of bank parties where he and I danced together.

Riess: Did Isadora Duncan put in any appearances in your life?

Cunningham: No, not at all. I just remember the name from later on. I can remember Ruth St. Denis though, the Denisshawn Dancers, seeing them on one occasion. My first opera was "Aida" and I heard that in Civic Auditorium.

The 1928 European and East Coast Tours--The Knights of Columbus

Riess: Tell me about the Knights of Columbus. How did that function and what is it all about?

Cunningham: As I remember, and of course it's still in existence now, it was an organization of men of the Catholic faith who were chosen to belong to it, a service club. I don't know what went on in any of their meetings, but there were certain degrees and Daddy and Uncle both became what they called fourth degree Knights of Columbus. I guess you worked up in the ranks from the beginning as a young man. I don't remember when he became a Knight of Columbus.

On various occasions, they would be in a special cloak, and they had a sword and a certain kind of a hat. Sometimes some of them would be asked to represent the church at certain festivals or programs in their Knights of Columbus formal outfit, the black tie and tails and then the cloak and that sort of thing. I can remember as a child seeing the sword in the closet at our home. I don't ever remember seeing Daddy dressed up in his complete outfit. I think they would go to the dinners and the parties. Now, when he ever appeared in the other attire at an event, I never remember that. I just remember that he did belong and served the archdiocese in the capacity of the Knight of Columbus.

Riess: Does this come from Europe, the Knights of Columbus, as a group?

Cunningham: No, I think the Knights of Columbus is an American Catholic Church organization, probably based somewhat on the Knights of Malta, but it was an American foundation because there is a national organization. As I remember, it would have been in the time of Archbishop Hanna, and my uncle also belonged to Knights of Columbus.

Riess: The Knights of Malta have a fascinating history. It's so old.

Cunningham: Yes, it goes back to the Middle Ages. I have been to several of their events in San Francisco at the cathedral. When a couple of friends of mine were going to be invested as Knights of Malta or as a Dame of Malta (we have friends of the college and of the family who are in that), I have attended those events on several occasions. But the Knights of Columbus, I'm sure they had an annual banquet, that sort of thing, and they would be advisors to the archbishop in business and that kind of thing, too.

Riess: When you talk about degrees, then I think of the Masons, very secretive.

Cunningham: I don't think the Knights of Columbus had that. Of course, the Masons, don't they have a thirty-third degree?

Riess: Yes.

Cunningham: So I really don't know. That's much more open, I think, now than it used to be and it did have an aura of mystery that to me the Knights of Columbus didn't. Now, that was only because my father and uncle belonged to it, but I don't ever remember that there were anything like secrets or anything like that. It was just probably that after a certain number of years that you belonged and were an active member, then you were allowed, I suppose, if you wanted, to take the next step, whatever that meant. I really don't know because I have been out of that kind of thing for a long time.

Riess: I know that when you went to Europe, you went on a Knights of Columbus trip.

Cunningham: Yes, that's right.

By 1928, my father had been twenty-five years with the Crocker Bank, and in those days the bank gave a six-month vacation with pay to employees who had been there that length

Cunningham: of time. Apparently the Knights of Columbus--I say apparently because I wasn't in on the original planning of this at home--the Knights of Columbus must have sent out the brochures that they were going to have a tour of Europe in the summer of 1928. The tour was going to be something like six weeks. My father decided that wasn't going to be enough time, so we would go with the Knights of Columbus, but we would stay on and then we would do more things and we would do some more traveling later on around the United States. So that was what was planned. I would have just graduated from high school then, so it was going to be before I started college. It fit in very nicely for the four of us to have that opportunity, to have this fabulous trip.

Riess: Traveling is overwhelming, particularly getting a whole family packed up.

Cunningham: Remember, too, that we went by steamer, which meant that we went across country by train to New York. We were on the then largest liner, the Majestic, for a six or seven-day trip across the ocean, which again was an exciting event. You were three days and four nights, as I remember correctly, on the train, and then a day in New York to get onto the ship, the magnificent steamship, the Majestic, and then with all of the activities, of course, with everybody else. Of course, these Knights of Columbus were just a small group of passengers that were on the vessel naturally. It was wonderful; it was just party time the whole trip.

Riess: Your mother actually says that she thought it was rather boring. I couldn't understand it, she must have been a little seasick or something.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, we all got--my daddy didn't, he didn't get seasick, but I did. But Mother's own personal friends weren't really among the group. It was a group of Knights of Columbus of San Francisco, but Mother didn't know all of them and, of course, she was away from, as I was away from my chums and Mary Frances was away from her little girl friends. We were separated in a sense, and were just a family. My father was gregarious and, of course, he knew everybody on the ship within twenty-four hours practically. But it's true that, for example, the games that were played on shipboard, that was not in Mother's capacity. So it was only boring in the sense that she read, I suppose, constantly and then you dressed for dinner, you dressed for lunch, and that sort of thing. There were concerts and that, but she liked the excitement of seing different things. Of course, once we got on European soil, she just loved every minute of it.

Riess: Yes, I loved her description of it. One phrase I wrote down. She is such a woman of the world and things were so comfortable, and at one point she said, "We gathered our purses and furs."

Cunningham: Yes, that's right. We had steamer trucks. You think now that you have to limit yourself to a shoulder bag and something that maybe a porter could carry when you get there. In those days, it didn't matter how much luggage you took, and we took plenty of luggage because it was on the steamer, so you had your steamer trunk and you took everything that you thought you might need in any kind of weather. You had everything for any emergency. [laughs] Oh, one time I remember the things that we needed when we had rain being in the trunks that were in another city that we were going to. So once in awhile, we didn't have the right particular thing at that time, but you just took lots of things.

Of course, remember the laundry wasn't as easy as it is now, so you had to be sure that you had plenty of everything that was proper to wear at whatever event you were going to go. I had--I picked it myself--a coat with a fur collar, and Mother with the shoulder furs that she put on when we were in the Alps or wherever you needed to. Heavens, I remember we were very cold in some of the places. You know how the weather is. So it's true, the purses and furs and don't forget the gloves! [laughs]

Riess: Do you remember stopping and buying a green lace dress?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, I certainly do on Fifth Avenue! Oh, yes, I remember that very, very well. Shopping, I suppose, is one of the things my sister calls my favorite addiction. I said, "Mary Frances, I don't always have to buy; frequently I do, but I just love to look at things." So I remember that Mother had said that I could have something special, and it was a lovely green lace dress, and I remember a very pretty brooch that I had got. I bought one over there that matched it. I think my sister still has that to this day. Oh, yes!

Riess: Actually, New York must have been a little hard to get through in one day.

Cunningham: No, when we came back we stayed in New York, and since right now San Francisco is having a revival of Showboat, I will have to admit to seeing the original cast in Showboat following our trip to New York because when we came back from Europe, then we spent time in New York, Montreal. We "did" the East Coast. We had family there. We visited our family up in Vermont. We still had a month of travel across the country to visit our

Cunningham: family and friends and spend time shopping and seeing New York. That one day in New York between the train and the Majestic was not time enough. That was just a mini-stop there, even though we had a fabulous stop at the old Waldorf Astoria that was on the site of the present Empire State [Building]. Because of our connections, we were given the presidential suite for our use that day. So that was an exciting thing, to be in that elegant splendor. I remember a gold piano up in the suite.

And we shopped in Europe, because that was what Mother and I loved best, as well as seeing things.

Riess: What did you bring back? Can you remember buying art?

Cunningham: Oh, I bought prints, yes. One of the things that I collected at the time were prints and Daddy bought a lovely lavaliere and I remember a lovely necklace for Mother in Nice in a jewelry shop there. Mother bought clothes for Mary Frances and me.

Riess: What kinds of prints were you interested in?

Cunningham: We still have them someplace.

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Riess: They were etchings or engravings?

Cunningham: Etchings and engravings of the places so that I would have a collection then. We did a lot of photography. Of course, it was black and white then. We had our collection and then my father had told Mary Frances and me that we had to keep a diary, and we both had diaries. It's interesting to read back.

Riess: In your mother's journal done in later years, she tells the marvelous story of being in Nice and your dancing with the hotel gigolo--I guess that is what he was.

Cunningham: That was in Stresa, yes, that was up at Stresa. Well, we danced at Nice, too. I loved to dance, and these handsome young gentlemen would come up--we were in the lounge, and it would be the equivalent to what we would say is tea dancing now. But the one that I remember and, of course, I was naive about it, but Mother sitting in the lounge area thought nothing of the fact that I was out there dancing and it wasn't until only there was an approach made later on [laughs] that it was realized that this beautiful dancing was supposed to be a come on to something else!

Riess: [laughs] Well, at the very least a little money! I think that's interesting. What are your diaries like? Are they diaries of events, or of feelings and thoughts?

Cunningham: They're mostly of events, yes. My diary that I kept last year when I spent five weeks in England and Scotland, just this last summer, is much more of what I wish I had kept in those days, but it was really kind of a chore in a sense. As much as I loved history, I wasn't thinking myself of keeping a history by recording in great detail. I was just anxious to get an entry so that if Daddy asked, "Did you write in your diary?" I could say, "Yes, I did!" [laughter]

Educated in the Schools of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Riess: I think I would like to go back and pick up what was going on with you. A lot of your life has been revealed by reading your mother's journal and so I know where the story goes, but at this time, in your teenage years, she apparently didn't know what was going on in your mind.

Cunningham: I had gone all through Notre Dame Elementary School and Notre Dame High School and had known the sisters since I was able to know anything, so if you mean why did I become a sister? how did I happen to think about it? where did it begin? I suppose it began as a child.

The sisters were very, very good. I loved them. They were strict, some of them were very strict. Some of them were just much the kind that I would want to have today. I have no recollections of any harshness. I have to say that.

When you read about that play on Broadway today, making a mockery of Sister Ignatius and all that, I don't know where those people ever went to school.* Certainly there must have been some sisters who were hard, because the sisters and priests are human beings, but I have to say of my own recollections of the many sisters I knew, and I did not have a lay teacher until I went to high school, and as much older as they certainly

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*"Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You," by Christopher Durang.

Cunningham: seemed to me then to be as a child, and as strict as they were--we weren't allowed in class to talk, but no teachers want students to talk and, of course, we were trained to do at home what your parents do, and when you go to school, you do what Sister says--yet I have never any recollection of any harshness or unkindness. Certainly I was a naughty child in school in many ways, because I was very active and I wanted to talk. Certainly I was scolded, and I had to stay after school. But I don't call that kind of thing cruel or harsh. As a teacher myself years later, I, too, disciplined students who were not conforming to what would be normal behavior in a classroom situation.

Riess: But no corporal punishment?

Cunningham: Oh, heaven's no!

Riess: No ruler across the knuckles?

Cunningham: Never, never. And therefore, if anybody else might say, "Was it because your family knew the sisters?" I can say, "No." And I was in a classroom with fifty, sixty, seventy children. People like different people, so some sisters were liked more by the students, perhaps some of the younger sisters, because they would be out on the yard and do yard and recreation duty. Some of those other sisters, seemingly older at the time I knew them, had a wonderful education; many of them had gone to what was the State Normal School, the teachers' training school in San Francisco. If they hadn't had a degree when they entered the convent, and many didn't, they then received a fine education. That has been a specialty of Notre Dame all through the years, so that the sisters were, for the most part, very good teachers.

From the very early days, Notre Dame in all of its high schools as well as in its college was affiliated with--I'm not sure that's the correct term, but was accredited with the University of California. The University of California used to send inspectors or representatives to the high schools. Now, when I was in high school--I don't remember them in the elementary schools, but it may have happened only to the high schools--I can remember the inspector from the University of California coming. We were not told ahead of time what class he was going to visit.

So, the educational program of Notre Dame conformed to what was expected by the University of California for graduates of high schools to be able to get into the university. We did not have frills. Of course, in the elementary school we had sewing, which I hated; painting or drawing, which I was just

Cunningham: terrible at; class singing, which was all right, except that it seemed to be pretty technical--the singing I liked was just the informal kind of singing. So we had those parts of what would be the kind of training that all the schools had at the time. The public schools had them as well.

In high school, there were more sections. In the elementary school, we were all in one classroom all day long. There would be a recess and then the noon period and then an afternoon recess and then home. So it was pretty structured.

Riess: In the classes there were really fifty or sixty girls?

Cunningham: Oh, yes. Now, the only thing that I did differently was when I was in grammar school in the fourth grade, my mother had me take French because there was a French lay woman--I have to go back and say, yes, I did have as a teacher a lay woman--who taught French early in the morning before school. It was a woman who had evidently come out to America after World War I, and for whatever reason was not able to go back to France; the sisters gave her a job at Notre Dame in San Francisco and she taught French. So I was in the fourth grade and I imagine the sisters probably sent a note home for "anybody who wanted" to enroll. There was an extra fee, of course, and you had to be there earlier in the morning. But my mother decided that French was a very good thing for me to have. That was the only class that I ever remember being taken out of a larger group--well, it was before school, so that was a small group.

In all of the other classes, everybody was in their desk and you changed subject matter. There was a bell that would ring at the end of a half-hour or three-quarters of an hour and then the next subject would be taught. Practically all of the subjects were taught by the same teacher. We didn't change our seats; we had a set place. We changed places every semester or so, but if we were fifty in the classroom, those fifty were being taught reading, writing, arithmetic, and all the rest of it at the same time.

We had teachers who were very strict in their markings. We had to because we had to do well. When we went into high school, again, the classes were large, but then we were in sections. It was the same thing when my sister, who was six years younger, went. She also went to Notre Dame in San Francisco and had some of the same teachers that I had. They still had the same classroom techniques of students sitting in the same seat; your subject changed. You got out your next book, and your teacher got her next book, when the bell rang. I don't think we even took a little stand-up break; we simply

Cunningham: took our books out. You were sort of brought up that way. It wasn't any regimen that you felt oppressed [by]. Now, people today, looking back might say, "Look, they made them sit in their chairs!" [laughter] Certainly, they made you sit in your chairs!

Looking at what children have to learn today! Of course, "today" we are very modern with computers. Our own elementary school here on the college campus has I don't know how many computers; they have had for years the kind of individualized instruction that has been very modern. But remember we, in our English classes, would have been diagramming from the time I was a little girl in the fourth grade through eighth. We diagrammed poetry as well as prose. We'd practice also long speeches. We knew these lines by heart. A lot was of course by memory. We memorized poetry and I think that's a marvelous thing because later on in life these phrases, these lines, come back to you. You don't have to say, "Where did that come from?" You sort of know; it just was a part of you.

In the eighth grade, I can remember having word analysis. We had just a small brown book that had Latin and Greek, the symbols, the Greek symbols, and then the translation of that Greek word into English [and] Latin. Of course, the Latin symbol is the same. We had to learn the roots of the words that we used in the normal everyday language and find out if they were from the Latin or Greek. So we knew the Latin and Greek alphabet. When we went into high school, most of us took Latin (most of us also took another language), so that by the time we graduated and took the English test to get into the University of California, for those of us who came from schools that had that kind of language as a background, there was no problem with our entrance to the university.

Now, with mathematics, that was different! If there had been a stricter mathematics entrance program at the university, I might have had another story!

Riess: It was all academic.

Cunningham: Oh, yes.

Riess: You were not tracked in your high school classes in any way?

Cunningham: No, no, we would all have about the same subjects, and for the most part we would have been students who had come from the same elementary schools. Now, it is true, there were transfers into the high school, as some students came later as boarders to high school, and they probably would have come from other

Cunningham: schools. The four years of high school were similar, though we had transfers, I suppose, even in the second and third years. I don't remember any senior transfers, but they would have had much the same background in order to get into the senior year at Notre Dame.

Riess: Actually, that makes me want to ask whether, in a situation like that where you have the same sisters teaching year in and year out, what about the student who is sort of below average? Wouldn't your reputation precede you in that situation perhaps more than in a public school where you go from teacher to teacher and move around a lot more?

Cunningham: Again, I am just trying to put myself back in my high school class setting. It just again seems to me that there was much more homogeneity. Probably maybe we wouldn't have been there if we hadn't been more of the same--students whose parents wanted us to have a purely academic [education], knowing that the sisters and the college prep course would require more along that line, for there were no business courses at all.

I'm just trying to think when the girls would stand up to recite, there were probably some who would evoke perhaps criticism because they didn't speak as well as others, but maybe they wrote better than some others. There was never any moving around in class, where poor students were in one area and better ones in the other. It was not anything like that. I don't remember how we were placed. I remember no distinction really of any kind at all, none whatever. Maybe I wasn't observant, I don't know. Most of the students that I knew went on to college.

Riess: Mary McCarthy felt there was a brutal cutting down to size in her Catholic school.

Cunningham: I haven't read her book. I read excerpts from it years ago, and I probably would have been pretty upset, except for the fact that that might have been her experience and I can't say what she had. I know that there certainly may have been some people who have had persons in religious habit or out of it, just as they must have had them in public schools, who would cut people down to size.

As I said, I know I was no model child in school, that was for sure, in the sense that I was extremely active. I wanted good grades and, therefore, I always wanted to give the answer. I know that bothered one of my teachers very much because the minute she would ask whatever the question would be, I'd have my hand raised because I wanted to give the answer, and

Cunningham: I'm sure this bothered her tremendously. It wasn't aggressive in the sense of wanting to put other people down at all. I just wanted to let her know I knew the answer, and be able to get an "A" in the course.

I know that when the Cal professors would come on their accrediting trips the school's reports were always very good. We weren't chided to "be sure you do this when the professor comes." You just knew that he came every year. We were supposed to be on good behavior everyday and so when we weren't, we "got" to stay after school! That would be maybe to write lines, or dust the blackboard, or something, as I suppose happens even to this day.

The Decision to Join the Order

Riess: What we were talking about was how you were making your decision to become a sister. Maybe we're wanting to find out, too, whether any of these sisters in particular were influential.

Cunningham: As I mentioned, and that's true, to go back to that point, I always liked the sisters, even if they were strict. There were several that I didn't like personally, but I learned from them and I knew that those sisters were fair in their judgment of me even though they didn't like my wiggling or my jumping around. But for what I would want to be in the future, I just thought of being a sister and it wasn't certainly that anybody was putting it into my head, even the sisters, although once in awhile I suppose somebody would refer to my cousin who had been a sister of Notre Dame--although that was long before I went to school as she had died when I was four or five years old.

I remember seeing the pictures of our foundress, Julie Billiart, Saint Julie, in the habit of her time, of course. We learned in school about her and she seemed always a very, very wonderful person, very warm. She is called "the saint who smiles." In fact, her portrait is down in the parlor here, and it's a very warm, loving picture. So actually I think I was drawn to her as a wonderful person to follow, and here were people who followed her and were helping me in education. It wasn't in any way that I was going off in a corner and being pious. I was not.

I never mentioned this idea of a religious vocation at home until I was just about ready to go. I never said I thought I would be a sister. I just went about all of my social events and parties and sort of kept it in to myself, but I always thought and knew I wanted to become a sister.

Cunningham: Really, I did think that I would go into the convent, as they say, but when I did tell my mother that, when I was a senior in high school, she said, "No, I don't think so." I don't think she ever thought I had a vocation really. But she didn't say, "You can't enter," she said, "If you are going into a teaching congregation, you should have more of an education and your father and I want you to go to college first."

When Mother spoke like that, I did not try to persuade her to change her mind, and I was perfectly agreeable to wait. So I went on then for the next five years just doing all of the things that college girls did at the time, but knowing that I still wanted to be a sister.

When I came down here to college, I didn't change, nor did I when I went to the University of California. I went to many social events there and the sporting events or whatever; I went to many parties, had many friends who were St. Ignatius [University of San Francisco] graduates. I was really closer with boys who went to St. Ignatius than those of other schools.

I loved--I simply adored--dancing and in our neighborhood parish that I talked about, there were many family friends who had boys, so many of us went around together and had dances and parties in each other's homes. We were always having parties; in high school you had your junior dance from your school and then you had the junior dance from the boys' school and if the school didn't have a dance, the families did.

But none of that, as much as I enjoyed every activity--and I loved having everything new, and I enjoyed all to the full--none of this had me in any way change from the fact that I still wanted to become a sister of Notre Dame when I finished college.

Riess: When you said you wanted to become a sister, you were talking about wanting to become a teaching sister because it's a teaching order. It never occurred to you to become a sister in a different order, or a contemplative order.

Cunningham: No, no, it was in the context of a sister of Notre Dame.

Riess: I should think that your mother so many times along the way when you were in high school would have even been thinking about you as her married daughter and saying, "When you've got a family, you'll have this and this," and yet you wouldn't respond to that by saying--

Cunningham: No. In fact, in Europe, one of the things she bought, I remember, in Belgium was a lace cap for the first grandchild.

Riess: That was an enormous secret you were carrying around.

Cunningham: Yes. Well, there is a certain feeling; I knew that my mother was going to find it very hard and I knew that I was going to enter and I knew that I couldn't do it until such-and-such a time. So you don't kick against the goad. It isn't that I wanted to get away from anything at all. I loved everything I was doing, the enjoyment, and of course with the boys, the young college students whom I dated, there were a couple that were very close to me and I never indicated to them my plans. [pause, laughs] I just burnt my bridges!

Riess: I just think it's very interesting. You had a strong character and it was a very gracious thing to do in a way, but very powerful.

Cunningham: I guess I didn't analyze it at all in that sense, except that I just knew that that was the career, the vocation, I felt that I was called to; it isn't that I didn't love some of the boys in the sense of enjoying them and going out with them. But I still knew that there was something more that really God wanted me to do, and it was giving up in a sense, but I wasn't thinking of turning my back on that. I had to turn my back to get to the other place, but it was the other place where I wanted to be.

Riess: That sense of God wanting you to do that, did you have what might be described as visitations?

Cunningham: No, just a feeling within. You can't exactly describe it. You just have an intuition or a feeling and, of course, our family had a great deal of faith, so my belief in God is strong. Faith is a gift, I know that. You do not have it if you are not given it.

So if with everything else that there was on the other side to--what must I say?--pull me away from something that was going to be diametrically opposed to the life that I was leading, in the sense that it was not going to be all fun and games, I still knew that's what I should do. So it was a feeling. It was not any vision, nothing like that at all, just a confirmation within my heart. I don't know how else to say it.

Riess: So it was not irrational in any way. It was always a rational decision.

Cunningham: Really yes, and when I was a little girl, I didn't talk about it. The sisters once in awhile would say something, and I would sort of shake my head and brush it off because I did not want to be ever thought about as pious. I know that sounds almost irrational [laughs], that you don't want to be thought of as one who is going to enter the convent, but I didn't. I never told anybody until the very end.

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Cunningham: Not until I was in college did I really mention it, and it wasn't that I wasn't close to a couple of the sisters. One sister in particular, my high school junior class teacher whom I loved very much, I'm sure she probably knew that I would enter, but it was unspoken because I was always into things and events and I wasn't very pious. I went to church, I read many things about religious life. In fact, my father later on said he wasn't surprised I entered, because he remembered that I read books that had the lives of the sisters and so forth, and that he had seen them around the house. But I was doing it quietly. I wasn't doing it in any observable fashion.

It's true that I would go to the chapel in the convent, the school there, and make a little visit every day; we called it a little visit. I did that, which was the only thing that probably was a little pious. I wasn't the only one who made chapel visits, but that was one of the things that I did. But for the rest, I did all of the things that the young girls did, tried the lipstick, tried the smoking. (But I didn't like that, so I didn't continue that. It's a good thing I didn't, my father would have had a fit!) I liked jewelry and clothes, so that people on the outside did not consider my entering the convent. That's why my mother thought that I had really forgotten about it, but I really hadn't.

Riess: So if you had made that declaration out loud, then you wouldn't have been able to lead that other life?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, I could have; oh, certainly.

Riess: But don't you think you would have had to deal with a lot of questions about why you were living in such and such a way now, when you were committed to this other way of life?

Cunningham: Maybe some of the people who thought I might be going to enter were surprised when they would see me enjoying so much of all of these things that everybody else did in that day, but that was their problem, not mine!

Riess: That was their problem, but it would have been your problem maybe once you had said that.

Cunningham: I don't know. It's hard for me to say. I just didn't want to talk about it. I mean, it was something that was private and personal to me.

Riess: You are being very agreeable to even talk about it with nosy me! [laughs]

Cunningham: No, no, no, that's all right. No, but I'm just explaining it now. If I were myself back in those years now, I would say, "No, I am not going to talk about what I am going to do." People would say, "What are you going to do when you finish college?" and I'd say, "I'm taking the liberal arts," or whatever everybody took as liberal arts, at least in those days.

Riess: Did you have a confessor, a priest, with whom you were very close?

Cunningham: Yes, there was a priest to whom I was very close, a Jesuit priest whom I loved very, very much, and he knew about my plans, in fact during my high school and college days he knew, and he was a close friend of the family, too. He was just wonderful--Father Edward J. Whelan, just a beloved friend. We all loved him dearly; it was through him that my uncle became so involved (Uncle William McCarthy) in the work for St. Ignatius College and the Jesuits, and he later became one of the founding regents of the University of San Francisco. But that's another thing.

Riess: Okay, we should stop.

An Audience with Pope Pius XI

[Interview 2: September 23, 1982]##

Riess: Do you remember having the papal audience in 1928?

Cunningham: Oh, yes. Through one of our dear Jesuit priest friends, Father Villa, who had a cousin who was an assistant--I don't know exactly what you would call him--to Pope Pius XI, our family had a private audience. I say "private" because it was to be just our own family and one other family of three. Our mother wanted a priest, Father Walsh, whom we had met on our trip, to come with us, but the priest wouldn't come without his host on the trip, so that then there were ten of us altogether in the audience, which is an unusual thing for just an ordinary family to have with the Holy Father. It was a most remarkable

Cunningham: opportunity for a family such as ours to have this very private audience with the Pope. Of course, it was thrilling going through room after room, my father in his formal attire, and my mother in her black with the mantilla, and Mary Frances and I both dressed all in white.

Riess: Going through room after room--

Cunningham: You went from one audience room to the other until we were in a very much smaller room, and into that room, as we stood in a semicircle waiting, came Pope Pius XI, accompanied by the relative of our Jesuit priest. He was then an Italian monsignor, Monsignor Caccia Dominioni. The Holy Father came to each one of us as we knelt down there. We had rosaries for him to bless and he spoke to several of us.

When he got to me, he said, "So you are from Notre Dame in San Francisco?" The monsignor who had talked to us before the audience had asked each of us some questions so that he could go back to the Holy Father and say, "Now, this is the family from here or there, and the tall girl in white goes to Notre Dame in San Francisco." Then the Pope said something to my father and mother, and to my little sister and then to the other guests. It was a remarkable and impressive opportunity for us to have indeed.

Then two years later, we had another papal audience, but by that time there was a crowd. There were forty! [laughs] That was a marvelous opportunity again to be in such a small group with the Holy Father and again that had been arranged through the cousin of dear Father Villa.

Riess: Is there a lot of etiquette that you knew ahead of time? For instance, could you have directed a question to him?

Cunningham: No, one could not initiate any remark, only respond to what the Holy Father might say, and I think that's still the practice. Maybe with Pope John Paul II there is more freedom, but there it was more formal, of course. There was just a small group, first ten, and then forty, two years later, and now the subsequent times that I have been in Europe and have seen other Popes, Paul VI, John XXIII, and John Paul II, it has been with hundreds of thousands, I guess, except once in St. Peter's at the canonization in 1969 of St. Julie with Pope Paul VI presiding. That would have been within the confines of the basilica where fewer were present. I had seen him several times earlier at other events, other occasions, but always with thousands of people and never on a personal basis as those two

Cunningham: early audiences had been. That was for no other reason except that we were friends of this cousin of one of that Pope's special aides, through Father Ottavio Villa, who was a very well-known Jesuit in the California province.

Oh, it was very awe-inspiring to see for the first time in your life that figure, white figure, come through a doorway into the room where you were and there he was going to greet you and talk to you, an unbelievable thrill one never forgets.

Riess: On that first trip, I imagine you went to other holy places. I know that you went to the mother house of your order.

Cunningham: Of our order there, yes, because we were in Belgium and I wanted to have us go out to Namur where our generalate, our mother house is, and Mother and Mary Frances and I did go. My father did not. He played golf, on the golf links near Waterloo! I just remembered that! But we were shown around Namur and the places that are very important to sisters of Notre Dame and to Notre Dame students.

Riess: Were these moments very significant?

Cunningham: To me they were, yes, and to our family, too, because naturally the opportunity of seeing at close range the Holy Father and being in his presence is something that in those days was much harder to come by in one sense, or not as frequently done, shall we say, because people didn't travel quite as much then as they do today. Then to be able to go to places where you have had connections from the point of view of your religion, for example, to Assisi and to the birth place of St. Francis. For those who are San Franciscans and Catholics, being in a place where St. Francis was has a special significance. Then we went to Lisieux, the birthplace and the home of the Little Flower, who had just recently been canonized and was a very important new saint on our roster of saints, so that going there and stopping off at her shrine was a memorable occasion.

Riess: For Catholics to visit places like this, is it equivalent to Moslems going to various shrines or going to Mecca once in their life?

Cunningham: I can't speak of the equivalency, but it would be similar. I think Moslems almost have to try to get to Mecca; that's the great aim of their life. Now, with Catholics, of course--

Riess: It doesn't make any difference afterwards?

Cunningham: No, no, there is no requirement whatsoever, but for the opportunity--and you know how it is today. Everyone who goes to Rome tries to go to St. Peter's Square at a time when the Holy Father will be a white speck out on the balcony--and that is for anybody, regardless of religious background or whatever connections.

Above. left: Catharine Julie Cunningham with her parents and sister, European tour, Monte Carlo, 1930.
right: Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham with her father, College of Notre Dame, Belmont, 1932.

Below. left: Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham with her mother, College of Notre Dame, 1969.
right: Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham with her sister, Mary Frances Cunningham, College of Notre Dame, 1968.

II JOINING THE ORDER OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME DE NAMUR; FIRST TEACHING WORK

Distinctions Among Religious Orders, and an Overview of Changes

Riess: Do you remember in Death Comes to the Archbishop the scene on the terrace in Rome in the very beginning where the Pope and some of the cardinals are sitting and discussing what will happen to the Church in America?

Cunningham: Willa Cather?

Riess: Yes.

Cunningham: I haven't read it in a long time, but some of these books written some years ago, you realize that it is fiction, yet there is a fact that has come out of it because certainly the Pope and cardinals have had many discussions since the days represented in that novel about what was going to happen to the Church in the world.

Riess: I know that in this order you have an interest in the pioneering history of the sisters who came to Oregon.

Cunningham: Yes, our coming over in that Indefatigable was certainly a remarkable accomplishment for the brave women that set out on that trip.

Riess: I understand why you are in the order you are in. But how does one choose among Catholic orders? Let's say I were making some choice. How would I decide where I would attach myself?

Cunningham: I would imagine at first you would have talked to somebody that had some knowledge of a religious congregation, whether it would have been to a priest or a sister, and you would have

Cunningham: indicated what you hoped to do with your life. If, for example, your previous career or your interest had been in nursing, you might be drawn to an order that did specialty work in hospitals. If, for example, you had grown up as I had in a school where the sisters whom I knew were teachers, you would no doubt have made inquiries. Because of my own family connections with the sisters, I was drawn to them--not because of teaching, but because to me what I was going to do was secondary to my becoming a sister of Notre Dame.

Today's process for people who are changing careers is much more analytical than it would have been, say, when I entered the convent. So you would have to know what the spirit of the congregation was, whether it was a community that was very outgoing or a community such as a cloistered order, for example, that did different types of work, yet stayed in one place like the Carmelites or the Poor Clares or an order such as that, or whether you liked the spirit of St. Francis and their work with the poor, and you wanted to involve yourself in a work that would be particularly along the lines of social service. And then where you would want to establish yourself.

There are many, many more opportunities today, although there are fewer people going into them. But I mean there are so many more religious congregations around the world than there were in the past. There are many smaller groups and there are larger national groups or groups just in one country. Then there are the large international orders. It really would depend on your feelings and desires, and your religious sense, as to what type of order, and then with the career that would be involved in it, what you wanted to do. Then you would simply go to different places where these orders were and maybe stay with them for awhile. If you read Thomas Merton's story, you read his wonderful Seven Storey Mountain to know how he got to Gethsemene in Kentucky. It was a long, long search. So it depends on the individual.

Riess: It's interesting to make the point that it's more analytical now. Did the orders proselytize? Were they competitive in their reaching out to the girls?

Cunningham: I wouldn't think they were competitive. There were certainly some sisters who had the intuition to detect in perhaps some of the students a potential for that kind of life, and then they would perhaps ask if the girl had ever thought about it. Now, when you say competitive--

Riess: I mean among orders.

Cunningham: I don't think so. I think they would have reached out to those who were in their own areas of work, the students whom they had, or maybe the nurses who were with them.

Riess: There are no differences of belief that would make one group feel that they were holier than another or superior in some way?

Cunningham: No, no. No one can speak for an individual's reaction, but certainly that isn't to me the hallmark of any religious congregation, to think it's superior. Some are similar in their work, but their spirit would depend on that which had come down from their founder or foundress. So you would have to go back to the roots, as we say today, to find out what made Notre Dame's spirit or its feeling different from some particular Dominican order or a group of Sisters of Mercy. It would depend on the way their family--and religious family I am talking about--had started out.

Riess: That history has been venerated and kept in tact, so that's your identity?

Cunningham: Yes, it would be what we call today the charism--that word is bruited about now--the charism of the foundress or founder. What was the charism or that great spirit that emanated from St. Ignatius to make the order that we know as an outstanding religious order of men the way they are, as different from, say, the Dominican priests and the charism of their wonderful founder, St. Dominic, or the Franciscans and their founder, the great St. Francis. It's a family spirit really.

Riess: Yes, that's a nice point. How has the order changed over the years?

Cunningham: Our order has changed in going from an order in which we were much more confined to the convent and to the area, the specific area, where we did our work in teaching to an order now in which we are free to go out into areas. Before it was much more restrictive. For example, we did not go to our own home until there was a death in the family. Now we may go home on any occasion to visit. There is no restriction whatsoever on our going home, staying with the family, visiting.

That is quite a turn around from what I grew up with as a very young sister. It wasn't that we were confined the way a cloistered order was, we were not cloistered; the term might be semi-cloistered in that we would go out to events with the students, but we never went to their homes. We would go to the museums, the parks. As an educational order, we'd take

Cunningham: students on trips to Sacramento. I'm speaking of the California province now, of course; sisters in other provinces take students wherever else it is important to take students. But we did that because that was part of the education of our students and that was what we were all about.

For going out for what might have been just pleasure for us--and, of course, assumingly, if people invited you, it was a pleasure for them--that was not possible for us until the order held what we call a General Chapter--which would be another term that we don't apply but it could be similar--a Congress of our sisters.

Riess: This was internationally?

Cunningham: Yes, internationally, and [it] decided, in the light of the current developments in the Catholic Church as a whole, what the sisters of Notre Dame could do today, in the true spirit of Notre Dame, and what St. Julie herself would allow today. Then all of the sisters of the whole worldwide congregation (and we have been between three and four thousand sisters of Notre Dame internationally) made the decision within their own groups and then through delegates to a General Chapter that there would be much more freedom allowed.

One of the first obvious changes was apparent in the change of the religious habit to what was at first a modified habit with a veil and the hair showing and in the navy blue or black. Now, anybody who chose to keep the original habit might do so, but I don't think there have been very many who have. There might have been a few of the older sisters in other provinces, who had done that, but most, even of the older sisters, have modified, and then the younger and the middle aged are usually in contemporary attire with the Notre Dame cross, either the smaller one or the larger one, as a mode of identification.

That has, of course, been a point of conversation, of discussion, shall we say, for those who have observed us, and those even within the confines of our own convents, but this is the way it is today.

Riess: I take it this is post-Vatican II that you are talking about.

Cunningham: Oh, exactly.

Riess: Had there been a push in the fifties and sixties to begin to change?

Cunningham: Yes, there were certain modifications, but they weren't terribly visible to people on the outside of our congregation. There would have been things--customs--perhaps in our own communities that went by the boards and were changed.

Now, when I mentioned travel, because I was in high school administration and in college administration, even before the opportunities were made for any sisters to travel a distance, I went many times for meetings, and so forth. But that was because it was in my role as an educator, and in those instances I went and visited people in their offices; I had to do public relations work. That was permitted always, to do the traveling that you had to do for your work, and to make modifications in whatever you would normally not do were you at home.

So there were smaller modifications that were made pre-Vatican II, as you'd say. But once the great Roman meetings had been held and the religious congregations, particularly the international ones, with their mother houses or their generalates in Rome, had their congregational meetings, then many orders--not all, of course--made many great modifications and we, Notre Dame de Namur, were among those that did.

Riess: So then the delegates came back here--

Cunningham: And implemented the decisions that had been made. We were kept alerted to those as they were transpiring in Rome. Communication can come very quickly now. As it happened, I was an official delegate from the province at the chapter of 1963. That was the beginning of the great change-over, that particular chapter. Then I attended, not in an official capacity but yet was present, at the chapter in '67 and '68--and observed the changes as they were taking place and being implemented there. Then, of course, there was a time lapse in which there was certain experimentation, for example, even with the garb. So it has been a gradual reassessment of what we have been doing.

Riess: But in that case, all of the orders were thinking together?

Cunningham: They could have been, and many were. I cannot speak for all orders, but I know that the Sacred Congregation of Religous, a group in Rome, is there for the help and direction of all religious congregations throughout the world. If an order's rule or your statutes are to be approved, you have to send them to Rome. Perhaps they were approved according to a mode of life of some years ago. Then if you were going to revise that rule, then you sent the revised copy back for their approval within the framework of what the Sacred Congregation

Cunningham: and the canon law of the Catholic Church felt was proper for a religious congregation. And we've been much more free since those days in directing our own changes, still in the framework of canon law.

Riess: Then the issue of whether or not to change sounds like it was still a question. You could have been given that freedom, but--

Cunningham: That's true and there have been congregations (I could not name any) in which there has been much less change.

Riess: In the period from the thirties through the fifties, the time of your college days and then into the convent and then in your various roles in education and in your order, was there ferment at all?

Cunningham: No, we didn't have that. We did ultimately during the days of the sixties, but in the earlier days not really. We knew that the General Chapter would meet in Namur or Rome every six years, and we would send delegates. We had an opportunity for saying what we would hope might happen in the light of the thinking of the time. As I said, many of the changes were modifications that were not too apparent. With Vatican II, now, that really brought ferment with, I guess, all religious congregations and with our own, because there were to be many radical changes, such as the external mode of clothing, and many other evident differences.

The College of Notre Dame in 1928, and San Francisco College for Women on Lone Mountain

Riess: Tell me about the college when you were a student. Were you a boarding student or a day student?

Cunningham: I was a mixture of both, because I had a car and drove down from San Francisco. But there were so many events and occasions when I wanted to stay overnight and that was possible. The college was extremely small--everything was confined within Ralston Hall and Cuvilly Hall and rooms over in the Carriage House. The high school had been built, but that was for the students of the high school. We had many opportunities to stay overnight on campus, so it was a combination of both commuter and boarder. Technically, I was a commuting student, but in actual fact many times I stayed over, as I did later on at Cal where I would stay out at some friend's house or a sorority house. You would just do it for whatever was going to happen there.

Cunningham: We had, as I said, a small group. I don't think there were more than thirty in the college in those years, because it was only a two-year program and they had just moved up a few years preceding from San Jose where the college had been established in 1851. It was 1923 that the college was actually beginning here in working order, and I came in 1928. The high school had been constructed, at least a good part of it at that time, so the grounds were beautiful. We had lots of places to walk and enjoy the hills. The classrooms, [there] were some in this building and some up in Cuvilly Hall.

It was very small, and we had a very personalized education. We had lay faculty, of course, but not too many because the staff didn't have to be as extensive for thirty in a small institution. There had been more, of course, when the college was in San Jose. There the high school and the college had been on the same grounds, and in a sense we are on the same grounds, but the college was much more separated when I was here. I think in 1923 everything was in one building, but when I came, it was just the college that was here, and the high school had their own new building.

Riess: Did that mean that you had much choice of classes with only thirty people?

Cunningham: I think that the program would have been similar to just the liberal arts program. We had English 1A and philosophy--[laughs] I presume 1A--and the biological science that we would have had to take in college. But there would not have been any sections from which to choose, except in foreign language where you would be according to where you were on the language scale.

For the rest, you were where your class went, and those who came here, of course, were coming with the idea of transferring because they would have had to [for a four year college degree]. The only opportunity of something other than liberal arts was a business course, and there were students who did come and, as I remember now, probably were going to take just the two-year program in secretarial work and business. But for those of us who were planning to go on to college and finish our degree, we just took what probably we would have taken over at Cal with many more people.

We had also drama and music and parties. The college was not yet coed, of course, so that was a little bit different.

Riess: Did you have any men in the faculty?

Cunningham: Yes, we had a priest for theology and philosophy, a wonderful priest, Father John Greenan, and we had a Mr. Daniel Sullivan in drama. Incidentally, he was the father of one of our long-time faculty members in today's college, Dr. Mark Sullivan. For the rest we had lay women and sisters.

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Riess: What was left of the French and Belgian influence on the order?

Cunningham: You mean a direct influence?

Riess: Yes.

Cunningham: Oh, these sisters were American sisters who themselves probably had had Notre Dame training in the early days in San Jose when the college was down there. They had entered there and then they had studied at Sacred Heart College in San Francisco, which was conducted by the Catholic University of America, a branch that had sent some of its top professors out. But these sisters were American sisters. I did not have any foreign sisters.

Riess: The order wouldn't have continued to send foreign sisters here.

Cunningham: Oh, no, no. That was only in the pioneer days, getting us started, and then American girls began entering the congregation; no, there were no foreign sisters here really at that time; maybe there were one or two of the older sisters who at that time were out of teaching completely and were simply in a retired capacity.

Riess: Did you work hard in your two years of college studies here?

Cunningham: Oh, no, I didn't! [laughter] I certainly didn't. I just didn't study really any more than I had to. I only became a much better student when I was a sister and was not into all of the distractions of young college students. No, I never worked really very hard.

Riess: Did you make friends in those days that you kept up with over the years?

Cunningham: Yes, girls who had been to high school with me and then had come on to Belmont, and I have been friends over the years; some whom I met here in college and at Cal, we have become friends.

Riess: Some of them entered the order also?

Cunningham: Yes. That would obviously be a minority of the group that went into religious life, but there were always a few.

Riess: Where did you go the last two years?

Cunningham: Right after I finished here in 1930, my family spent three months again in Europe. I was going to go to Berkeley to the University of California, but by the time I got back from Europe it was just the end of September and classes had started there much earlier. Lone Mountain Religious of the Sacred Heart had their college in Eleanor Martin's mansion on Broadway; just as we had been in a mansion here, that was the beginning of Lone Mountain College. Even though I was late for their first term, I went there for one quarter from October through December of 1930. That was in San Francisco, so naturally I was a commuter there. Then I transferred in January to the University of California in Berkeley, from which I graduated in 1932.

Riess: Who was Eleanor Martin?

Cunningham: She was a grand dame of San Francisco in its early days and it had been her mansion. I don't know whether it had been given to the Religious of the Sacred Heart. I rather imagine it had. They utilized it as their beginning building for the college group. It wasn't the high school group that was at the Convent of the Sacred Heart. This was the beginnings of the Lone Mountain College as it then grew up on the hilltop of San Francisco and now is a part of the University of San Francisco.

Riess: It's a wonderful name, Lone Mountain.

Cunningham: The location was called that . It really wasn't called that officially. It really was the San Francisco College for Women on Lone Mountain, and then when it went coed, and I am presuming this was at the same time, they simply called it Lone Mountain College.

Riess: Was there anything about that semester there that was different? It was the first non-Notre Dame experience you had had.

Cunningham: Yes, it was different, the spirit was quite different. I had such a knowledge of Notre Dame and had known the sisters of Notre Dame all my life, and there was much more of a freedom, to me, in the spirit of the sisters of Notre Dame. As a young girl I found the Religious of the Sacred Heart, while very fine teachers, much more restrictive, even in the way in which we had to adapt ourselves to living in that mansion. We had had full use of this mansion here in Belmont, and could go up and down any stairs within the framework of the college part. Of

Cunningham: course, there was a convent part that we didn't, but there at San Francisco College for Women, we were restricted to certain staircases and so forth that I found a little different. There had been a freedom with Notre Dame that I didn't [have there].

I knew I was not going to be staying there and I was really headed for Cal. I didn't find that I was drawn away from my idea of going on to Cal by having had that one semester there. Later on, as a young sister, when I went to Lone Mountain to get my teaching credential--because I did not take any courses in education when I was undergraduate, I did all of that later on at Lone Mountain College as a young sister--it was entirely different, of course. By then we were up in the new area and the sisters were very, very nice and the faculty was very good and that was an entirely different situation. But as a young girl, yes, I did find it quite different.

University of California, Berkeley, BA 1932

Riess: Tell me about your Cal years and your professors there.

Cunningham: I chose history as my major. History and English, of course, were specialties that I wanted to take. I was a commuting student, so I had to take courses that would allow me to get over to Berkeley within a reasonable period of time from my home on Dolores Street to which we had moved in 1924.

Riess: What was the route to get there? You got on the bus?

Cunningham: No, I got on a jitney right in front of my house on Dolores Street. You'll never believe it, it sounds so fantastic today. They were very large cars, larger than a taxi, and they were called jitneys. The one in my area started up probably on Twenty-fourth and Castro and then came back Twenty-fourth Street and turned right down Dolores Street right in front of my house. So I went literally from my glass of orange juice, which would be my sole breakfast meal to my mother's distress, of course, hopped into the jitney where there was the same group of people everyday, and then that would go down to the Ferry Building and then we took the ferry across. I had a marvelous time. I regretted the demise of the ferry, because for two years or for a year-and-a-half really, it was just delightful everyday to have the ferry ride and then to take the Key System up to the campus.

Riess: It all functioned smoothly?

Cunningham: Oh, yes.

Riess: The jitney was always there, the ferry always on time?

Cunningham: The jitney was always there if I got on in time. I don't ever remember missing it. Well, I didn't want to miss it because then I would have had to take the streetcar and that would have been a much longer trip. On my way home, I didn't take the jitney. I took the streetcar from the Ferry Building.

Riess: Was the jitney like a van pool? They would expect you?

Cunningham: Yes. It would have been really the size of what we call a limousine, but it wasn't as gloriously shiny as limousines are. But it was a large car. It probably took seven or eight of us as I remember now. You just paid your ten cents. Can you imagine that? [laughs]

Riess: How long did that commute take from home to school?

Cunningham: You would get your jitney, say, at eight o'clock, and it had only the stops to pick up the regular passengers and then it would zip down Mission Street and you would get the next available ferry.

Riess: Could you make a nine o'clock class then, do you think?

Cunningham: Oh, I must have had to because I am sure I had some nine o'clock classes in Wheeler Aud[itorium] where hundreds of people were all rushing to get to class at nine. Of course, if I could have, I would have tried to have a later class. [laughter]

Riess: I think we are getting the idea that--

Cunningham: Yes, I wasn't a super student in that sense, but I loved my classes, I loved going there, I loved the university. I had some wonderful teachers and I'd have to go back over the names now. I suppose my favorite faculty member was a Dr. O'Brien in the history department, an absolutely marvelous teacher, a young, handsome man who had really an untimely death after I had graduated. I also had a very fine professor in ancient history, Dr. Van Nostrand. I had Dr. Guttridge in English history, and Dr. Paul Schaeffer in medieval history.

I recall also, in English, Dr. [Willard] Durham and Dr. Sanford. I had very fine faculty members there. Remember, I was an upper division student and we did not have any TAs. We had the top men; I was very fortunate.

Riess: Did you have any women, do you remember?

Cunningham: I don't remember that I had a woman at all.

Riess: In economics and in social welfare there were good people, women.

Cunningham: I didn't take any social welfare, and the economics that I took was actually lower division because I did not have the full requirement for a history major. I hadn't taken all of the economics, so I had to take an additional class in econ and that, I know, was an undergraduate class.

Riess: Some of the more radical thinkers were in the economics department.

Cunningham: But I took a minimum amount of economics simply to make up what I should have as a history major, and then I just took as much history as I could of the European courses. That's the period of history which I loved.

Riess: What about the Depression? That was happening all around you. Was it happening to you? Did it mean that you had less money in the family?

Cunningham: As far as we were concerned, there wasn't any change in the opportunities that were open to us. My father's long term of office at the bank, twenty-five years by 1928, gave us the time for trips to Europe, which again were seemingly remarkable at the time of the Depression.

Riess: As you took your jitney downtown and got on to the ferry do you remember people begging on the street corners or whatever, some of that?

Cunningham: I sound as though I just didn't observe very much, but I don't think that we saw as much, even though I was riding up and down Market Street and Mission Street. I was going to and fro, and on the ferry boat you were with the group that was mostly the students. I suppose there were some workers, too, people who worked in the East Bay. But for the most part, you were with the students who were going over to Cal, and on the train it was the same thing. So it was much more of a homogeneous grouping.

Now, what did I see on the campus? There again, I don't think I saw much of anything that would have indicated Depression there.

Riess: A lot of the people who became politicized then also joined the Communist party. There was a lot of political stuff going on then.

Cunningham: Yes, but I can only remember one young man who was very vocal in much more of a social setting--socially out of class time--and I couldn't even tell you what his name was now, but I can remember that he, since you bring it out this way now and I am just thinking of it, he was probably the most (quote) "radical" of the group that I had encountered. I don't ever remember that in class. Remember, I was taking European history and, of course, for the most part, the classes were larger. The classes in Wheeler Auditorium, even though I was an upper division student, we had hundreds of people there. There weren't the opportunities in the lectures on European history to get into--to change the topic so to speak--to what was happening today.

Riess: To what was "relevant."

Cunningham: Exactly, we'd say that today. But outside of class I can just remember one encounter, talking with somebody who obviously had been in a class with me. I remember I thought he was a pretty, we would use the term "far out" thinker, but it wasn't anything that affected my thinking because I was concentrating on the classes in European history and anxious by that time to get some more respectable grades, as I was headed for my degree.

I am sure that concurrently there were the thinkers on the American scene who were in tune with what was happening in the European world and the current world. But we had traveled in Europe in '28 and '30--and this is a very positive comment that I can make--and we observed that in Italy, and this would have been in the early Mussolini period, the streets were absolutely shining in between the two years of '28 and '30. Now, that seemed positive that Mussolini had (quote) "cleaned up" Italy. But then going back to the university, one could not talk about that over there. [muses] So why didn't we pick up anything political over in Europe while we were there, while I was there?

Now, I can just give a specific instance of a problem, and it was only years later that I realized the significance of it. I mentioned the Jesuit priest, who was a family friend, who was of Italian background himself, Father Ottavio Villa, who was the one responsible through his relatives and his connections with the Vatican for having us have these two marvelous audiences. While we were in Rome on those occasions, my family would entertain him. My father would have him for dinner and then we would be with him a considerable period of time because he took us all around to places where maybe other people weren't able to get.

On one occasion we were having dinner, and this was on the 1930 trip, and my mother was commenting and used the name of the man who was the premier, and I can remember this, she said

Cunningham: something to the effect that, "My, we noticed an improvement in the appearance of Rome since we were here two years ago, that it is so beautifully kept and the streets are sparkling. Mussolini has seemed to have done a wonderful job." Father Villa, very quietly but significantly, made a motion to her and indicated under his breath not to say that name. He said, "We will refer to that individual as 'McCarthy.'" We could not say Mussolini out loud!

Years later I was doing graduate history work at the Catholic University of America and taking a course in comparative government, and in the course of that program had to read the constitutions of the governments of Germany, Italy, and England on which the course was based. I came upon a law in one of the Italian documents of the time that it was forbidden to utter the name of Il Duce in public.

In 1930 when this was happening, Father Villa did not continue. He said, "You may not mention that name." My mother deferred to what was evidently proper. She did not know why, and we were told nothing more than that. It was just that it was against the law, and we did not discuss that any further. Only later on, many years later, did I realize that it really was in a document, and that there could have been great penalties, and this was in 1930.

You're talking about my work at the University of California, but that was so close to this period of my travels in Italy in 1930 when we couldn't say his name. I never thought about the significance again really for many years, and then it became evident in my graduate studies so much later.

Master's Dissertation on Peter Yorke, Catholic University, 1953

Riess: You wrote your master's dissertation on what issue?

Cunningham: It was on the Irish Republicanism of Peter C. Yorke of San Francisco, but it was on the Irish revolution of 1916. It was on a European subject and I was specializing in American history, but it was a subject that I took because of the man who had been a dynamic and outstanding priest, lecturer, defender of the faith, defender of rights in San Francisco, Father Yorke.

Riess: Of what period?

Cunningham: He was in San Francisco--the period that I wrote about was the last period of his life from 1916 to 1925.

Riess: Was he someone you had been aware of when you were growing up?

Cunningham: In a sense, yes. He had been an outstanding speaker in San Francisco on public issues. He had been editor of the Catholic paper, The Monitor. He had been a chancellor of the archdiocese (I am not saying this in any sequence now) and he had been a very prominent cleric and speaker in San Francisco and, therefore, I had known his name. He was a splendid educator. He had done a great deal for the Catholic Church as a young Irish priest sent over here as a "missionary" (in quotes) to the archdiocese, and was an outstanding man in many facets. He was really a man for all seasons.

I can remember as a little girl an occasion where the children of the Catholic schools met in the Civic Auditorium and Father Yorke spoke to us. It had to be before 1924 because I was in grammar school at the time. So I knew of him.

In my graduate work in history at the Catholic University, I wanted to write about somebody with personality. I didn't want a "dead" subject. Somebody suggested to me Father Yorke. He had done so many things that I had to zero in on one aspect of his career that nobody had touched upon, and that was the Irish Republicanism. He became a great defender of the rebellion and the attempt for freedom of the Irish in 1915.

Though Irish born, he had been a long-time San Franciscan, returned to Ireland for some years, and again returned to San Francisco where he had established a newspaper just as a voice of Irish Republicanism. It was called The Leader. I had complete access to the entire files, which was an important reason why I chose that subject, because I could do it conveniently. Father Yorke had a sparkling, magnificant, dynamic character. His life has been written by Father Joseph Brusher, S.J., of the University of San Francisco. My own dissertation has been read by those who have followed the story of Father Yorke. I certainly enjoyed writing on that topic.

Riess: That's unusual actually to write a dissertation on a person who is so contemporary.

Cunningham: Of course, by that time he had died.

But the issue in one sense--of course, how can we say the Irish issue has ever ended? But the specifics of having the government free in the Dublin area was pretty well settled by

Cunningham: the 1950s, which was the time that I wrote my dissertation, and the documents of the time, of course, were available to me. They are now in The Bancroft Library, I think. The documents that I used were original copies of The Leader and the Yorke papers and so forth.

Riess: You said they were made available to you?

Cunningham: Because they were in the basement of the home of a Father Hunt, John Hunt, in St. John's Parish in San Francisco. His brother had been Father Ralph Hunt, who had been superintendent of schools, worked with Father Yorke, and had all of Father Yorke's papers, and Father John Hunt made these available to me. That whole documentary file, and it was a mammoth collection, I was able to bring down to Belmont where I was stationed. I was a high school principal at the time and I used them at Belmont, which now I never would be able to do. It was remarkable, I just had wonderful access to all these primary sources. And there were many people alive in San Francisco then, perhaps retired gentlemen, and some women to whom I had perfect access for what you're doing to me [laughs], oral history on their recollections of Father Peter Yorke and his interest in the Irish Republican movement of their day.

Riess: Did you try to solve the problems of the Irish Republican movement?

Cunningham: No, I reported them historically. [laughs] He didn't either. He tried to resolve them for the time and he did a wonderful job and certainly was the voice of the Irish Republicanism movement almost in the entire United States through his paper, The Leader.

Riess: Was that something that was a household discussion, the Irish problem, over the years?

Cunningham: Not at the time, no, it really wasn't in that sense. I know that certainly people were aware of it because it was in the papers everyday, the newspapers of the day, but as I had mentioned to you, we, from the point of view of family, were so far removed from a family connection there, that it didn't personally affect us, only as we would read about it, and I don't remember as a young girl being that interested as I was as a young woman writing about it.

Riess: Trying to find out who Peter Yorke was, I came across Peter Maurin, and Dorothy Day. Were you aware of her?

Cunningham: Of her writings, yes. In fact, I can remember that the college had her here on campus for a talk. That would have had to be in the late forties or early fifties, when I was a principal down at the high school. Dorothy Day was considered a very dynamic and a marvelous woman in the light of the Papal Encyclicals, Rerum Novarum, Quadragesimo Anno, and social encyclicals of Pope Pius XI, which were taught to us as young sisters. Then we in turn would give the condensed understanding of them to our high school students in their junior and senior year. Those encyclicals contained the ideal of social justice.

There was a great movement in the forties by many educators in the church to spread in the schools the social doctrines of the church in the sense of being against that form of Marxist socialism and extreme communism that, of course, was coming to the fore. Dorothy Day was a very outgoing exponent of the Catholic worker movement in the East. Of course, we read ever so much about her. We also read about that Baroness de Hueck. I think she is another one who did a great deal for the Catholic worker movement also.

But I don't really remember the tenor of Dorothy Day's talk here at Belmont except that she told about her work and what she was doing currently, spreading her work, and founding centers for helping the poor and the abandoned in many cities. I am sure there was a group here in San Francisco that certainly tried to help in the way Dorothy Day did. I don't know if anybody had ever become as much personally involved as she, but there were certainly many who followed her and tried to help.

Riess: When you went to do the master's, did you actually enroll at Catholic University in Washington?

Cunningham: The Catholic University is in Washington, D.C., but there was a summer branch that was held for many years, and the site for it was at Dominican College at San Rafael. It ran concurrently with the Dominican College summer session. I was given an option by the provincial of my order here in California to go to Washington and spend the time there, but I chose not to do that. I did not want to be a student only for one solid year, three thousand miles away. I'm much more of an activist. So I chose to continue teaching and doing my work during the year and then to take the classes during the summer and do my research other summers. Of course, this was going to take a longer time, but if the province didn't mind, that was what I chose to do. I had the choice to do either.

Riess: All of your life, you have been close to your family.

Cunningham: Oh, yes.

Riess: So I should think it would be hard for you to have gone to Washington for a year.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, I didn't want to do that. I had traveled there. I had seen it. It wasn't anything I was looking to do, and I didn't want to give up teaching. Not that I couldn't have been replaced; I could have been, or obviously the provincial wouldn't have invited me to go. I said since I had a choice I would rather do it in the summers and then just take a longer time, as long as she didn't mind or the provincial and her council didn't mind. So they allowed me to do it my way and I'm happy I did it that way.

Teaching Credential

Riess: When did you decide to do the master's?

Cunningham: That was after I became a sister of Notre Dame. The first thing I had to do was, of course, get my teaching credential, which I did during summers. Because I had my college degree from U.C., I was able to teach in various high schools where I was assigned--Belmont and San Jose and Alameda. But to have the teaching credential, I then had to do what I hadn't done at all, take all the education courses at one fell swoop through summers. I took the courses, as I mentioned, at Lone Mountain College, or as it was still called, San Francisco College for Women, during the summers, for four summers, and I got my secondary credential from the state, and later got my life credential.

Then after that, I began my work on my master's because the degree and the credential were really important for my work in teaching in high school, and then later as the principal of several high schools. A master's wasn't required, but it was certainly suggested, and then I really became a student!

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Cunningham: I presume that the work I was doing as a young teacher was accepted by the recommendations that would have come from my principals and those who knew me in the teaching field. I don't remember that I was ever enthralled by any of the education courses. I know I wasn't. I enjoyed sitting close to the window where I could look out at the San Francisco Bay. Lone Mountain had a marvelous view. It wasn't any course that enthralled me; it was something that I had to do.

Cunningham: I had one of the outstanding teachers there, Father James Brown, later Monsignor Brown, who became the superintendent of schools. He was a very fine teacher in the philosophy of education; I know I enjoyed that. That was quite different from the sort of boring kind of thing of the history of the education process, but those were things that were required by the State, and it was through the State that Lone Mountain, that San Francisco College, was given this credential and they had to guarantee that we had taken these courses and had passed them successfully.

Riess: I wondered what kind of a teacher you tried to be, or who you modeled yourself on.

Cunningham: I don't think I exactly modeled myself on anybody. I just taught as best I--I shouldn't say I didn't model myself on anybody. I had had a very fine teacher when I was a junior in high school, a very wonderful sister whom I had loved very much, a Sister Marie Eucharista, and she was young and dynamic when I had her and she was my principal when I began teaching in San Jose, although I had another fine principal here in Belmont, too, in Sister Paula of the Sacred Heart.

These very good principals did a certain amount of guidance, not any kind of formal supervision by any means. There were syllabi and the syllabus that you had to prepare. It was probably that there was a native teaching ability that I had, plus a love of the student. I enjoyed the young people. I was a strict teacher in the sense that I would not teach with nonsense going on; it was quite a different thing when I was on the other side of the desk, I have to say! They always say that those who probably were the most naughty or whatever, would become [the strictest]--realizing later on that it was very distracting to the teacher. So I was a pretty strict teacher. I expected the girls to be there on time, to listen, and then discuss. I had a rapport with the students; I always enjoyed them very much.

Once in awhile, the principal would come in, but not very often. In fact, she was a teaching principal, so it would have been hard, just as I was a teaching principal later on and I didn't go into the classrooms of the younger teachers the way they do it much more now.

Riess: But you did submit your syllabus.

Cunningham: Yes. I can remember having staff meetings and individual meetings with the principal or with whoever was the equivalent of the chairman of the department. You were given your textbook and the requirements of what should be finished and completed correctly by the end of the semester or two, and then you just tried to follow that as best you could.

Archbishops of San Francisco

Riess: This is a tangent, but in the Catholic community of San Francisco, I want to ask you about the leaders. Archbishop Hanna. He was your parent's time?

Cunningham: Yes. The previous archbishop, Archbishop Riordan, had died I guess about 1913 or '14. I'm not sure of the year, but it was when I was just a very, very small child, so that my growing up years were under the term of Archbishop Edward Hanna who, of course, would have been the one to confirm me, because the archbishop always presided and confirmed the children, the Catholic children, of the archdiocese during the year. He presided at graduations for many of our schools and, from my own point of view, he was really a very close friend of our family's; because of the work that my uncle and father had done in helping in the various drives for the archdiocese and for various Catholic groups, we knew him personally.

When my grandmother was dying--my mother told me this later on; I think my recollection is simply based on what she told me because I was about seven or eight--the archbishop came twice to see my grandmother while she was in her last illness in her own home--she died at home--and I was on his lap, enjoying being petted, of course, as a little girl. Later on, mother said I said, "Now, when is the Pope coming to visit?" [laughs] So the archbishop was pretty close to the Cunninghams!

Riess: That's just what I was going to ask you. What kind of a presence did this man have?

Cunningham: Archbishop Hanna was a very, very warm, outgoing person and I was thinking since you mentioned this last week that from the point of view of civic affairs, he was really the predecessor of the ecumenical movement in the Bay Area. He worked very well and personally with I suppose the bishop of the Episcopal Church and with the representative of the Jewish rabbis--something that had not evidently been customary in religious circles in San Francisco. Now we are much more familiar with an ecumenical group that is meeting in one of the churches with representatives of other denominations being present in the sanctuary, or whatever they would call their very special place in church.

Riess: What kind of issues would such a high level religious group be attending to?

Cunningham: Remember, I was a little girl, a young girl, at that time and I'm sure some of it was with the questions of the differences in the religions and where there ever could be meetings of minds. I'm sure that had to be it, because there were, then, the periods of social strain and stress in the entire world which, of course, as we know, touched San Francisco, at the waterfront, for example, that kind of thing. The religious representatives--and I'm not saying that the archbishop engineered or was the first one to call the meetings, but he certainly was an outstanding figure in that kind of thing--I am sure social concerns of the day as well as the religious response to those concerns were among the topics.

I was too young really to have gotten into depth about that except that I know now in retrospect, when I heard about it, but I haven't done any reading about those times. Of course, there are all the records that would show that in the archdiocese newspaper of the day, The Monitor, which would have reported this kind of thing. They were not things that were not open. It was something that the people would have known about; those responsible would have certainly shared [it] with the press.

Riess: Are you saying that he was influential enough to affect the stand of a union, for instance, that was largely Catholic workers in the waterfront issue?

Cunningham: I am not so sure that he would have done that personally. I just think there would be discussions about that as to how they would have been handled. I don't know that he ever went (quote) "down" to the waterfront. I know that Father Yorke literally went down to the waterfront, but I don't think Archbishop Hanna did that specifically that I have any recollection of. That doesn't mean he didn't; I just don't remember that he did. But he certainly met with the interested parties in San Francisco, with the political figures of the day, the mayor and so forth, and worked with them to see where could the church be any help.

Riess: But he didn't operate on this personal charisma thing--

Cunningham: No, not in that sense down on the waterfront. He would in his public talks and in his talks in the churches. He was very outgoing and very representative, a very kindly, warm person, really very open to talk to anybody.

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Riess: There were a few thousand Episcopalians in San Francisco and hundreds of thousands of Catholics. Archbishop Hanna just really had a huge congregation.

Cunningham: Yes, he did. But there were many, many fine priests who for the most part, as I recollect, were priests who had come over from Ireland earlier. When I was a young girl growing up, those priests were middle-aged priests who had been here some time and most of them had been in the same area where I lived. There were many parishes all over the city, whose priests would have had a certain rapport with the archbishop. His help and direction would have gone out to all of the people in any area. I am sure there were many ways in which Archbishop Hanna and the priests worked with non-Catholics--the Episcopalians, for example, who were probably a very large group of the non-Catholics in the area.

Riess: No, only a few thousand.

Cunningham: But that is still a few thousand from the point of view of religion, and then there was a Jewish group in San Francisco and Archbishop Hanna was very friendly with them.

Riess: Then after Hanna came Archbishop John J. Mitty.

Cunningham: Yes. Now, he was an entirely different person in his manner, since he had been a man in the military. Archbishop Hanna had a great deal of warmth and a great deal of love and a special charisma. Now, you think of that, and then you say a military person. No matter what his personality, there is an aura of the military that is quite different from charisma that is so open. So there was a great difference.

But I have to say that from my own recollections, and from one of the family who worked for the archdiocese projects and helped the archbishop, my uncle, William McCarthy, who had been a very strong supporter of Archbishop Hanna and the Church in San Francisco for many years, [he] gave the same strong support to Archbishop Mitty and became ultimately one of his staunchest advisors. During his days as postmaster, my uncle's work, especially durng World War II, involved working with the service people and everything that they would have had to take care of in the postal service. City and the Church together had to help, and my uncle found Archbishop Mitty a wonderful, wonderful man, though he was a very different personality from Archbishop Hanna.

Riess: Not ecumenical perhaps?

Cunningham: Oh, no, I don't mean that way. Yes, I think he would have had to be in a certain way, but not, as my own recollection would have it, with the openness and personal warmth that Archbishop Hanna had. Mitty would have done it in his way, in his special role as the representative of the Church in San Francisco.

Cunningham: I know that Archbishop Hanna, as I said, and my uncle, had been close family friends. Now, the close family friendship did not extend to Archbishop Mitty. It was an official kind of thing, although he and my uncle were very good friends. But it wasn't the warm friendship say that Archbishop Hanna had.

As I said, my uncle was in a very strong position in those days in the city because he was the postmaster. He was responsible, as you know, for the whole Pacific fleet's mail and all the sort of thing. The work that he did earned him the Medal of Merit in the Truman administration. So he was very prominent and Mitty was very prominent, and so they worked together for what needed to be done for the people of San Francisco, albeit Catholic, Protestant, or Jew.

Riess: You explained how suddenly you were tapped to be president here. How about archbishops? Are they appointed from Rome?

Cunningham: Yes, I think there would be names submitted to the Holy Father in Rome and to his advisors, presumably as I would understand it, from the various pastors who would be looking toward a new archbishop. There isn't a specific term for that position, so no list for a future archbishop the minute a new one was appointed. It was evident that Archbishop Hanna was becoming ill; in fact, he went to Rome and he stayed there for some years in his declining period of life.

Obviously, then, there were names submitted to, I suppose, the apostolic delegate in this country who would forward them to Rome. From a list of those candidates, questions would be asked, feelers would be put out (I'm simply assuming this), and then one candidate was appointed. It wasn't a matter of choice by any one person. Even with a college president, I was simply told to go to the College of Notre Dame and sent to my office here. [laughs] Now, my successor had the choice of even allowing herself to be nominated for the position and interviewed by a search committee and so forth. So that's different, too.

Now, from the point of view of an archbishop--for example, when Archbishop McGucken retired and Archbishop Quinn was coming in, I am sure there were suggestions sent from the various constituencies in the archdiocese. What effect they had I don't know. People talked about it, hoped that so-and-so who is a bishop or an archbishop somewhere, might be brought to this area as an archbishop here. It's a little different from the way a college president is chosen today.

Riess: Yes, right, but one made me think of the other, and I wondered whether someone like your uncle, who was influential politically and in the Church, might have had a say at some level.

Cunningham: I doubt it, I doubt it. The role of the lay people in the Church was not in the governing of the Church. Now we do have parish councils. In the days in which my uncle and father were there, the parish priest would have had unofficial advisors. You didn't even use that word, you just talked to the people who were your strong supporters and helpers and who seemed to have a know-how in this area of expertise for the city, or that area of expertise for the Church. Now, that was the way there was help given to the archbishop, both in Archbishop Hanna's day, and certainly in Archbishop Mitty's day.

During the time of Archbishop McGucken--which is more recent, of course--a priests' senate was begun and then the role of the lay people was made much more a part of the parish life today than it ever was before. Officially now, informally before.

Riess: It is marvelous to think of the amount of change that you have experienced.

Cunningham: Yes, when you make me tell it, [laughs] I can realize it!

Riess: Thinking of you as an historian, when you were doing your European history, Church history <u>is</u> a lot of European history.

Cunningham: Do you mean when I was doing it at Cal or at Catholic University?

Riess: When you were doing it at Cal, when you were a history major.

Cunningham: Oh, to my knowledge there was no Church history specifically on the curriculum there.

Riess: I mean as your own personal way of looking at history.

Cunningham: Oh, with medieval history, of course, there is much Church history; a part of it, yes. I certainly have to say that we had marvelously broad-minded, unprejudiced professors who certainly weren't out to condemn what could have been condemned from a natural point of view in certain areas of medieval history. I took several courses, not as Church history, but as European history in such-and-such an era.

We learned the truth. We read the documents and were referred to those documents where you could go and read these events, those circumstances, and the other matters concerning a papal situation, or a schism in the Church, the Crusades, and the problems with those Crusades. All of those areas, of course,

Cunningham: I studied, but I wasn't taking them because it was Church history, but because it was history and the Church played a very important part in European life because of the Christian element there, of course.

Coming to the College of Notre Dame as a Postulant

Riess: In 1932, you finished at Cal.

Cunningham: In May.

Riess: What was the transition? You came home and packed your bags for the convent?

Cunningham: Oh, I didn't go until August. We had the summer.

Riess: [laughs] You continued to do your--

Cunningham: Of course, right up to the moment I entered! [laughter] We vacationed--I remember one of the vacations was in Yosemite. I have a picture of Mary Frances and me on a horse in our riding attire, because we rode there. We went down to Los Angeles; our father attended a banking convention down there, so Mother, Daddy, and I went down. Mary Frances wasn't on that particular junket. I went to the parties and everything else that I had done all along.

Riess: Were there a lot of farewell parties for you?

Cunningham: The family had one because, as I told you I think the last time, I was not exactly advertising the fact. My immediate friends, of course, knew, but not even the boy friends until the end.

Riess: They are probably still getting over the trauma of here today and gone tomorrow! [laughter]

Cunningham: Well, that's really the way it was!

Riess: What did you bring with you when you came here? Do you bring personal clothing as a young sister?

Cunningham: In those days, yes, we wore a black dress, as you saw in that picture, and just our own things. Then six months later, we received the habit, and then you have the long dress, the veil, and the white cape that then was worn. Now, today you may just wear anything. There is no difference at all, except our Notre Dame cross.

Riess: Your father was posed in that picture with you, visiting you. Could you always be visited here?

Cunningham: Oh, they could come to visit me, but they were allowed only once a month, a "visiting Sunday." I have pictures some place with my mother and Mary Frances and me. That just happened to be a larger picture that I have there and it's a nice one. My sister likes that one very much, too.

Riess: But the plunge into convent life, is it sudden or gradual?

Cunningham: Remember now that I came back to a place where I had been to school. Actually, though, the difference was that I got to go behind some of the doors we had not been allowed, as students, to visit. But actually I had even been up on the third floor, because when I stayed there, I stayed in a room up there part of the time, too. So it wasn't so different. There was a section over in Cuvilly Hall that was for the novices and postulants, and it's true, there were special rooms where we had the meetings with the sister who was in charge of us and where we had our instructions on religious life and that sort of thing. But for the rest, I taught. When I was a postulant, I would go down to the high school on occasion, to give classes there.

Riess: You arrived here in August and in a way it was arriving at a job?

Cunningham: It really wasn't a job that I thought about. I didn't know what I was going to be doing, really. I remember that we didn't really do so much teaching as a postulant. Often I would go down to the school yard during recess and help.

I didn't have to take college classes, since I had graduated. I entered with a degree, so my time was a little different from those who entered and didn't have a degree, or hadn't finished one, and who had to finish college before going on to teaching. So, therefore, I could be sent down, now and then, to a classroom to replace a teacher. I enjoyed that very much.

Some of the alumnae today, the older alumnae, remember me when I was a postulant or remember me when I had my white veil, because I taught when I was a novice, too. There is one year of novitiate training in which one can't teach at all, which is according to canon law. You just may not teach; you just do some other work but that.

Riess: At what point is that?

Cunningham: It's the first year of being a novice, so that you have a period in which you withdraw from the activity of the education life or the nursing life, or whatever, and you just do other things rather than going out into a classroom each day. So there were those periods--like a retreat.

Riess: Is that to remove all doubts?

Cunningham: That's right, yes, a kind of in-depth period of study before you take what would be your first vows as a religious. You would have that one year in which it was really a period of prayer, religious study, and recollection. Even if novices hadn't had their degree when they entered, they couldn't go on during that one year. I had my degree, so it wasn't a matter of studying, but then I couldn't teach during my novitiate year. We could still go down and mingle with the students at recess or recreation. Since Belmont had a boarding school, we could go down to the school and be with the girls so that the other sisters could get away for their free time and that sort of thing, but not for the teaching part. That still holds today for the year before the sisters take their vows, a year in which you do not do the specific work of your career, the career part.

Riess: Then what do you do at that point? Do you do more religious work?

Cunningham: Yes, there would be some more classes, where you studied the rule, you studied the history of the institute, so that you would have much more of a familiarity with it. It was really an in-depth period. That is what it is supposed to be, an in-depth period of studying, and praying and being as sure as one could be.

Riess: Was that a profound period for you?

Cunningham: Yes, the years before my vows. But I never had any doubts, but it was just that it was going to be a very special thing that you were working towards, the taking of your first vows.

Riess: Relatively little activity, it sounds like.

Cunningham: I don't remember it now as being hard, I really don't. I can't even tell you all of the things we did. Of course, there were domestic things we did; we did more cleaning then. The sisters who weren't out in the classroom or in school would take care of the boarders' area, with the staff that was already there, so that there would be a rotation of people to help. So we got domestic work in that sense, and we had our recreation periods, which were pretty mild, when you think of it now. Of course, we had more reading to do, that kind of thing.

Riess: How many were in with you?

Cunningham: In the novitiate, or in my own band?

Riess: I am thinking of the year segment as they moved through, so wouldn't it be always the same number, the same number who would enter as postulants?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, we were a group of nine when we entered.

Riess: Is that called a band?

Cunningham: A band, that's correct; a band of nine. Of course, we just celebrated our fiftieth entry since August 15, 1932.

Riess: Were they from all over?

Cunningham: One came down from Alaska and one came from Wisconsin or the Midwest area.

Riess: Do you mean to enter?

Cunningham: To enter, yes, and those particular ones are still in the Notre Dame Order. One is very ill now; both of them really are very ill at the moment. But others were from the area and had attended Notre Dame schools--nobody from my own college class or high school class entered with me, but there were girls whom I had known. Most of them had entered directly from high school. There was one who had been in business work. It was a varied group that entered.

Then, of course, there were the groups that preceded us and then new postulants, so in the novitiate altogether--because only as postulants were we separate--we were about thirty, I suppose, and mostly young people, so it it was a lot of fun, too.

Riess: When they or you enter, is it saying good-by to your identity?

Cunningham: How do you mean?

Riess: Like Catharine Julie, whose father does this and mother does that, or do you leave all of the worldly identification behind?

Cunningham: You found out what others did and all that sort of thing, but there was supposed to be less concentration on who you were than on what you were going to be, I guess. But your background, you couldn't help but know.

Riess: I would like to hear anything more you can think of to say about the first couple of years before you took your vows.

Cunningham: I was here in Belmont and, as I said, because I already had my degree and we had a high school on the campus, then I, even as a postulant, had done teaching, but that was minimal. My second year as a novice, I taught, and so some alumnae today remember me with my white veil, and I enjoyed the work there; that was the beginning. I don't think I necessarily enjoyed all the classes I taught because some of them were classes that I wasn't too "gung ho" about really, as we say now, but they needed somebody.

Riess: What was that, math?

Cunningham: [laughs] Math and some general science; not any real, real science but the general science which, of course, I had taken years before and read from the book, I guess, but those were subjects I never would have elected to teach. I also taught French because I had had a considerable amount of French. (In fact, some of the young women who are older women now, which puts me in a much older category, of course, remember me from their French classes.)

I was in a school atmosphere, a place that I was very familiar with, so there was no trauma in that sense. Of course, there was a trauma in leaving home, but I just didn't talk about that. That was the way it was to be, and it wasn't easy--by no means was it easy. I put on a front, but you do that when there is something that you are going to do. If you are going to do it, do it, but don't be weeping and wailing about it, and I didn't. [laughs]

Riess: That sounds like somebody's parent talking to you. Would that have been the way your mother talked to you?

Cunningham: No, no, oh, no; no, not at all. No, she felt very sad. Because we had had so much fun at home and had so many activities there, it was hard for her and for my father and for Mary Frances, my younger sister, too. I was a big sister to her and we had many fun times together. I loved her so much--not loved, <u>love</u> her so much; I just enjoyed taking her around with me, and so it was hard for her and I knew that. The family could only come once a month to see me for a couple of hours. That wasn't easy by any means, but I knew that ahead of time.

Riess: And for the other girls, they survived it, too?

Cunningham: Yes, only one of the group--two of the nine--did not make their final vows. One made final vows and left after that, so seven of us survived up to the present.

Riess: You say survive; that is a term you would use if you were describing boot training in the Marines. [laughter]

Cunningham: I meant actually lived up to the present! I know that people have read stories of some religious congregations. I remember—what was that hair-raising book at the time, The Nun's Story, that type of thing. But like your friend, Mary McCarthy, I was telling my sister about it yesterday and she said, "She was a very bitter woman. Of course, she would pick up things that ruffled her edges."

It is true then that there were religious congregations that were much stricter than Notre Dame. Now, we were strict in that we didn't go out, but we had our recreation periods, we had our periods of quiet and of silence which we knew, and we had our periods of study. We had set periods of going to bed and early rising and [laughs] those were hard, very hard! But we knew it at the time.

Riess: So there was no "you didn't tell me."

Cunningham: That's right.

Riess: Did you know Noel Sullivan?

Cunningham: I knew of him.

Riess: He had a sister whom he loved very much and for whom he created the Carmelite Monastery.

Cunningham: The Carmelite Monastery at Carmel is right near the property that the sisters of Notre Dame were given, near our Villa Angelica and near the Carmel Mission, so of course we knew Noel Sullivan. He was a nephew of the famous Senator Phelan of San Francisco; my family were acquainted with the Phelans and the Sullivans. We weren't close friends or family friends. There was another Sullivan family with whom we were close, but not with Noel's family. So I only knew of him. He was, as I remember, a musician and an artist and, of course, a man who was very good to the Carmelites.

Teaching in the Notre Dame High Schools

[Interview 3: September 30, 1982]##

Cunningham: In early 1935 I just had come out of the novitiate and I hadn't been attached to any special place as yet, so I was free to be placed for an interim period of three months at our high school in Santa Barbara.

Riess: You taught at Santa Barbara briefly, but for a longer period you taught at Belmont, Alameda, and San Jose. I am interested in the living conditions in each of them and the differences among them. In a way everything is the same, and yet there must be a lot that is different.

Cunningham: Belmont and Alameda were boarding and day schools and San Jose was a day school only, so there was a difference there in the kind of schools that they were.

Our high school here in Belmont was on the college campus, so that there were many events and activities, and some collaboration between the high school and the college, and the day school and the boarding school that made life quite a bit different here on this campus from that in Alameda. That was a small city high school, both boarding and day, right in the middle of the city of Alameda.

Then our high school in San Jose was the continuation of the day school that had been there since 1851, right in San Jose proper. That was a fairly large school and, of course, in my moving around, part of the time I would have been a class teacher on the staff and then the next time I came around, I was the principal as well as the senior teacher. So it was a variation of roles, but it was always pleasant because I knew the places very well.

Riess: Were you in what was called a convent, or in a house?

Cunningham: When I was connected with the high school here in Belmont, for awhile I lived in this house, Ralston Hall, and for awhile I lived in a room in the boarding school area down in the high school building. In Alameda, I lived in what would be the equivalent to the convent. Part of it was right adjacent to the residential area for the boarding students.

In San Jose we were just in the convent there that is still part of the school, though they have a new convent now. That school wasn't in the same site though. The original property had been sold by that time. The present school was over on Second and Reed Streets, whereas the first site had been on Santa Clara Avenue.

Riess: Was San Jose, because it was the oldest, the flag ship, as it were, of the fleet? Were there noticeable differences?

Cunningham: Well, Belmont was the place to which the original Notre Dame of San Jose had moved--except for a day school that was allowed to remain and grow there. We had more activities in one sense here, related both to the college itself, as separate from the high

Cunningham: school but still on the same property. There were many more different kinds of activities here in Belmont. I was sent to Alameda for a three year period, 1942-1945, during the war years, so there were many differences.

Riess: Yes, I was going to ask you about how that affected the school.

Cunningham: The only direct evidence of the war, as far as school was concerned, was that we had the pre-flight training boys from St. Mary's College come over for afternoon dances at the auditorium of the school. [laughing] These were little social events that involved those who were studying for pre-flight training at St. Mary's College, in Moraga, which had a division of the government service there. Of course, we were also near the shipyards. We had, I suppose, students whose families had come out because their fathers had positions in the army shipyard area.

Riess: Was it particularly a boom time for the high school?

Cunningham: As I remember, we had full capacity in all of those schools at that time.

Riess: I know that Catholic universities and Catholic colleges have questioned and redefined their roles endlessly since the sixties. How about at the high school level? Were they questioning?

Cunningham: I don't think they were questioning as much when I was in Alameda because that was during the war years and there was a stability about the institution. And that, of course, was before the pre-Vatican revival and upheaval of the "mission" of institutions, and educational institutions in a specific way relative to our work. It was still according to the old pattern of the liberal arts education and the training that we were expected to give in those schools. Latterly, of course, in our high school down here, and I was the principal only up to '55 and then I went to Alameda for one more year before I came back here as president, there was a strong stability.

I was not in the high schools during the (quote) "mini-turnovers" of the late fifties and sixties. I was in the college during that period. But I know there had been changes and that the biggest change was, perhaps, the closing of the boarding schools, both in Alameda and in Belmont. We do not have any boarding schools at all in the California province any more except on the college campus. They are just simply schools now for the students in the area who can commute to them, and they are filled to capacity.

Riess: When you were going through as a teacher and then subsequently as a principal, were the curricula in all three of the schools the same?

Cunningham: Yes, it would be more or less the same. San Jose had a secretarial department, a much more fully fledged one than either Alameda or Belmont. In Belmont and Alameda, there was an opportunity for typing, and I think that is about all on the high school level, and that was a salvation for the teachers who could at least read typed papers, if they couldn't read the handwriting of the students! But for the most part, the curriculum was the same. There was the opportunity for Latin, French, and Spanish, which were the three foreign languages that were taught in all three schools.

Riess: At what level is the curriculum for the Notre Dame high schools decided?

Cunningham: There is the Notre Dame Educational Group, and a province supervisor of the high schools, and she was one who kept in touch with the moods and trends of secondary education at a national level, and then in connection with the state level and the University of California's encouragement for the liberal arts background. She would go around and visit the schools and be sure that these ideas were implemented on the local level; there were also frequent meetings of the principals of the high schools with the supervisor. Then in the San Francisco area, there were meetings constantly with schools other than Notre Dame schools, so that you were really patterning in general what was the trend of the times.

Now, it's true that there were some schools that never had, for example, any secretarial skills taught at the high school level whereas we at least had typing. I don't think they have it at any of the schools now.

Riess: When you were involved with the boarding situation, did you as a teacher or principal deal with the parents? I am thinking of the parents who would come to you saying that the reason that their daughter was there was because she was a discipline problem, and they wanted you to take care of all of that?

Cunningham: I don't think that they ever came and said that "my daughter might prove to be a discipline problem." [laughter] Yes, I would deal, of course, with the parents. Usually the reason was that the family lived away from the school and they wanted this particular kind of education. Some, too, were from Central and South America--and Hawaii, too. Perhaps the father or mother were going to be traveling or had to be away a great deal of the time. In some instances there was a separation in the family, so the child was put into boarding school to give her some stability.

Cunningham: I don't remember that there was ever anybody directly saying to me, "My child is a problem, you take over." I don't think I would have been too gracious about receiving that kind of a reason because it's true that some of the children became problems, but it wasn't just the boarders who were problems by any means.

I have had some of my nicest relationships over the years with those who were resident students or boarders, as we call them, in the high school. They were there because their parents were in a certain kind of work in which they weren't able to maintain a special home in a special place all of the time--hotel work, military, and that kind of thing.

Riess: But don't you think they expect a kind of strictness?

Cunningham: Oh, of course, they did and in those days there wasn't the freedom that there was latterly in the boarding schools. For example, they could only go home, if there was even that possibility, say once a month, and then they had just a restricted number of outings over the weekends. We were supposed to be sure they were taken care of and you couldn't just let them wander any place. You can understand that, girls from thirteen to seventeen and eighteen, and some foreign. They would go out in groups. There wasn't much of a town to go to in Belmont.

It was less restrictive, as I remember, in Alameda. They could go over to Oakland. But down here on the peninsula, it wasn't too easy to get transportation. We didn't allow them to have cars on campus, so if they weren't able to drive around, it was a little bit more of a task to get out. That's why we had to arrange many outings for these resident students and the boarders for the weekends.

That was one of these points of ingenuity that had to be developed among the staff and faculty, to think of ways to have the girls entertained and amused and distracted and have some fun. There were games, as we played a lot of interschool basketball games. Those were very often on Saturdays, so the teams would go from one school to another and have a picnic day and a game and a victory or losing party, whatever, at the end.

Riess: I see references to the "rule, habit, and custom" of the order. Did that mean that when you moved into a different convent or school everything would be exactly the same?

Cunningham: [In] the order of Notre Dame all over the world, we wore the same types of dress--religious habit--so no matter where you went, that was what you wore. The horarium, or the time

Cunningham: schedule, in general was the same because we would have morning prayers and Mass. There would be a slight variation depending on the institution and the availability of the priests who would come to say Mass for the sisters and the students who would, on many occasions, attend the Masses.

For the rest, it would vary. It wasn't exactly the same because you had your yard duties at noon, so if there was a regular lunch period, that was variable. You would take it between eleven-thirty and one; you went whenever you weren't down in yard duty with the students, or whatever activity might have been held during the noon period.

Then in the evening, in the schools in which there wasn't a boarding school, the evening schedule would be more or less the same for prayers and meetings with the community and having dinner and then the recreation period and then study or preparing for the work for the next day. So it really wasn't absolutely the same. There was a similarity, of course, just as there would be in families really.

Riess: It sounds like there might have been a problem trying to find a little time for your spiritual life.

Cunningham: We had certain times that we were to allocate for ourselves for that, and some of that was with the community directly, and other times it was on our own. That was up to us, to schedule our day and our early evening so that we were able to accomplish the duties and the spiritual exercises that belong to our life as sisters of Notre Dame.

Some of it was with the community together and if you were involved in some work, say, very often with the boarders and resident students, every sister couldn't be in chapel at the same time. So then you just did whatever you were doing or going to do at your own time. Otherwise, most of the sisters would gather in the chapel or community room at the scheduled time.

Riess: Over the years, as you went from place to place, did you gain a seniority that is given some token heed or are you just all equal sisters year after year after year?

Cunningham: There is certainly an equality of being a sister of Notre Dame. I don't think the differential was necessarily by age, although when I was a very young sister there was a certain deference given to the then retired sisters, older sisters who had served for many years in the community and in the schools. The differences really would have been according to the work you

Cunningham: had to do; then your time-schedule was different. If you were with a group that went out with the boarders, maybe you were going some place that another group of sisters wouldn't be going, because they weren't involved in that particular activity. Many times, there would be an open invitation to all the faculty: "We are going to take the students to Sacramento, San Francisco, or to San Jose. Does anybody else want to come on that day and have an opportunity to visit the sisters in that particular community?"

So it really was a matter of one's role in the schools that made activities different. As for community, it was the same; the rules were the same for everyone.

Riess: So there was not a way then in which you became more independent?

Cunningham: No, because there was always the sister who was in charge of the community as superior, and when she had sisters who were in their seventies or eighties, or twenties or thirties, her care and her concern was for them equal. She may have had to exercise her care in a different way with the young sisters who were in their twenties or thirties or even their forties, considering that there were many older sisters that were there also. It depended on the situation of a particular sister, not so much seniority except insofar as for one who was older there would be a different kind of care that would be needed. In those days, too, the sisters didn't drive as much as we drive now, so there had to be a concern to get sisters to the doctors or to wherever they were supposed to go. It was that kind of difference. The younger sisters had more of the opportunity--having more recently driven cars--to be able to take a community car and drive it without having to look around for a driver.

Riess: Were systems developed so that a novice sister would have an older sister who would be her companion?

Cunningham: For many years the sisters didn't normally go out alone, so sometimes a superior would send another sister with a person who had to go to the doctor's, and other times you could choose, just get somebody to go with you, because for many years we did not, as I said, normally go out alone, though there were occasions, of course, when we had to. So you would either find someone, or the superior would say, "Sister So-and-So will be going with you" to whatever meeting, or whatever it would have been.

Riess: Why <u>were</u> you moved around? What didn't you <u>stay</u> at Alameda, for instance?

Cunningham: As there are placements in jobs in companies and so forth, so there would be the necessity for making changes from one position to another, from one grade level to another. There was a rotation for the opportunities that were needed in that particular school, and that's where the supervisor of schools, and the provincial and her council, would look over the roster of sisters for a coming year and try to determine where the best placement of the sisters would be. Sometimes there would be an illness and a sister would be out for a period of time and she would have to be replaced.

Then sometimes, as happened to me a couple of times, I was taken from a position where I was a classroom teacher without any administrative roles and put into administration. That meant I was replacing somebody else who was going to another place, and then somebody would replace me in my role.

Riess: I was going to hazard a guess that maybe one might become too temporally connected to a place, too personally involved.

Cunningham: Considering that I was here for twenty-four years--[laughter]

Riess: They knew a good thing when they saw that they had it, but in general?

Cunningham: I suppose there might have been that. It really would depend on the kind of person, the individual. I don't know that there was a planned mode of moving people. With some, maybe if someone felt that she wasn't suited for that particular class or environment, she might have to make a request or might have made a request to the superior that she would feel that she should go some place else or be placed some place else; that can still happen today.

On the other hand, the superior and the principal could, as you say, find that someone perhaps "needed" a change, shall we put it that way, and therefore, even though the person might not have wanted to be moved, that was the decision that was made and that was what we did. We simply went where we were sent.

Principal and Superior, Alameda

Riess: All of these years, were you being groomed to be the president of a college?

Cunningham: I don't think so at all.

Riess: When did the star appear over your head, do you think?

Cunningham: I had been principal down at our high school from '47 to '55 and then I was transferred to our high school in Alameda where I had been once before. I had had a term of three years there and had enjoyed that very much. But I was transferred to our high school in Alameda as a superior of the community, which is one job, and then also as the principal of the high school, which is another.

Riess: That's right, and the people reading this won't know that you have lifted your eyebrows a couple of times significantly, meaning that that was quite a task! [laughter]

Cunningham: A double jeopardy, I think! So I was sent over there in that dual capacity then in 1955. Having been to Alameda before, I knew my way around there, of course, and I had a very nice group of sisters on the faculty with whom I worked, so it wasn't until the following summer--it was in June--that I was told that I was to go to--it wasn't a choice, you understand, the way I'm saying this, there was no choice--that I had been chosen to be president of the college in the fall of 1956.

Riess: But your star dawned--

Cunningham: The star fell--crashed! No, I had no inkling whatsoever, none whatsoever.

Riess: Did you have any ambitions?

Cunningham: No, not at all. It never entered my head really. Of course, I had been close to the college as a place where I came everyday because it was on the same campus as the high school, so it wasn't as though it were a strange place, but I just always considered myself in the role of being with the high school. It never entered my head; I hadn't thought about it whatsoever. So it was a surprise in that sense.

Riess: What is the job of a superior? I know what the job of a principal is. What did you have to do when you were in Alameda?

Cunningham: The role of a superior, whether it would have been in Alameda or here later when I had the role, too, is to be the one responsible for the group of sisters who are in the community. It's like the head of a family in that sense. So you were there to be a help in the material and in the spiritual and in the educational way for those who were in your (quote) "family."

Riess: At Alameda, was there a convent?

Cunningham: Yes, there was a convent of Notre Dame there. Yes, there is today, too. There were boarders there, and so it was a group of sisters, probably around twenty sisters who taught both in the parish elementary school and in the high school. It was a very close group; it was very, very nice and I was very happy there. It wasn't anything that I was trying to get out of. No, I was very happy. I had been happy here in Belmont when I was in the high school, and I was happy there in Alameda.

I just knew when I was told to go: it was in the days when there were no questions asked. That was the provincial superior of the whole province, which was California, Oregon, and Washington there, too. She was the one in charge--the provincial superior, of a province, not just of a house.

Riess: So you were a local superior?

Cunningham: I was a local superior, as well as the high school principal. We are an international order. The international government, covering Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South and Central America, is centered in Rome; I mean, that is the generalate. Then there are the American provinces; because we are so large, we are divided into six provinces. And then we have foreign missions, too.

The whole structure has changed a bit, but we're not getting into that right now. There isn't a superior in every house, because the communities are small. Some are living in small groups; some individuals in some instances, according to their work, are living in apartments by themselves. But there is still the province, a council or team, and the person who is the equivalent of a provincial superior.

Riess: Were you referred to as mother superior?

Cunningham: No, the word "mother" has never been used in Notre Dame except for the mother general. I know, people would sometimes say "mother superior." Then I said, "No, I was never a mother." [laughs] I was always just a sister; sister superior, that was the title. But my name as principal, of course, was my own Sister Catharine Julie. I have never changed the name, but the community title was sister superior.

Riess: I have a friend who went to Alameda High School when you were there. I will share with you some of her thoughts. I asked her what her impression in those years was of what the Catholic college was to go to and she said Dominican was the place to go, but the College of Notre Dame was more middle class, with some old families.

Cunningham: That's probably true. The College of Notre Dame did not have a four-year college in those days. We became a four-year college only in the late forties, so we were new as a four-year college and that would have made a great deal of difference, whereas the Dominican College of San Rafael had been established as a four-year college for many years, and it's true that many richer families went over there because it was a full four-year college. They had such a beautiful boarding school there, and many of the San Francisco families wanted their daughters to have a convent education so by tradition, their children and grandchildren went to Dominican. That was perfectly true. I had a grandaunt in that order, my mother's aunt, so it was only because I had a cousin who was nearby in Notre Dame that I went there rather than to Dominican.

Notre Dame, for its collegiate work and its charter, is the oldest in the state for colleges for women. But we did not [have the long tradition in this peninsula area] because of the move only in 1922 of the college from San Jose. In those days, Notre Dame of San Jose had a tremendous reputation with many girls from the Latin American countries, from Hawaii and many other areas. Dominican did, too, but Dominican had the four-year program, while we in San Jose at that time did not. We didn't even have a junior college, as we know it today, for some years. So Dominican's reputation, and a very fine reputation it has and deserves, was longer established along those lines in higher education than ours.

Riess: My friend also said you were a fast walker.

Cunningham: [laughs] Yes, that's true! Only yesterday my sister said as were going to the theater, "Catharine, you are walking faster than I!" I said, "It's because you have a bum foot right now." She had broken her foot this summer. But it's true, I was always a fast walker. In fact, I used to run, if I could!

Riess: She said you were a cut different from the other sisters, and she felt that all of the other sisters admired your wealthy and worldly background. That's a hard one for you to comment on, maybe.

Cunningham: We weren't that wealthy, but it might have seemed that way because of the opportunities that the family gave us, and the sisters--I have had very good rapport with all of the sisters of our communities; we have had a lot of fun, and many good times together.

Riess: You showed signs of being a good administrator.

Cunningham: Of course, when I went into administration, except for my years at the college, I did teach also. So I was an administrator and a teacher simultaneously, and all the way through, in my role in the secondary schools when I was both principal and senior class teacher, I made it my practice to teach freshmen so that then I would know the school in total.

Up to my last year as a high school principal, I always taught the freshmen some class. Sometimes it was ancient history, which was on the curriculum for freshmen at that time, or it could have been an orientation program. Maybe I would only have them once a week. But at least I knew them by the end of the year, and then I would know them for the rest of the years. That was my own plan. I was prefectly free to set my own schedule. So although I was sent in to do the administration, I wanted to teach and, of course, I was needed to teach, too. We didn't have the luxury of doing just administration, if you want to call it a luxury. [laughter] And I wouldn't have wanted it, but by the time I got out to doing the college work, that was a different matter.

Riess: The first time that you were principal was in Alameda in 1942. As you have described becoming president here, was it that you were simply tapped or did you have some warning?

Cunningham: No, we were just told. I don't remember exactly how much time elapsed, but in that fall of '42, I was going to Alameda and I was to be principal and senior class teacher. Now, as it happened, and I think I had mentioned this earlier, I had had very good principals as models and had worked very closely with them. Of course, I didn't realize it at the time, but it was really kind of an internship with a very fine outstanding principal and I was very grateful for that. Then [when] I was on my own, at least I could remember what I had seen in operation and had seen work very well in previous years when I was a classroom teacher under a great principal.

Riess: Were you saying, incidentally, that you really learned the name of every student?

Cunningham: Yes. That's an aim I've had. I unfortunately was not able to pursue it all the way through in the college. In the earlier years of the college here, I knew every student by name. I didn't teach them, but I made it my job to learn. I used to bring the freshmen into my office in small groups and have a little--I used to call them "Coketail parties" [laughter]--in the afternoon. Then as we had the young men when it went coed, I didn't do it exactly that way, but I made an effort and was pretty successful in learning all of their names. That

Cunningham: has been something that in the latter years as the college grew I wasn't able to manage, because I didn't have that much direct connection with all of the individual students.

Riess: How about the attrition of names? I hope you dropped off an appropriate number! [laughter]

Cunningham: No. They would always ask me how I remembered the names and I can see somebody today perhaps that I hadn't seen in thirty years and remember her name. Now the thing is, I don't always remember their maiden name and their married name. It is either one or the other that sticks with me and I concentrate on that. So they have to put up with it if I don't remember their married name, but I can remember the other and for the most part, it is just a gift I have had of remembering the names and faces--but of learning them to begin with, of course.

Riess: Is there anything you would like to say about high school teaching over the years for the historical record?

Cunningham: I know that I enjoyed my work very much. I loved teaching. I loved history and English particularly and then I had, of course, the religious studies or religion classes when I was a homeroom teacher. That was the custom, that the homeroom teacher would have the class for religion as well. I got to know the students so well that way and enjoyed working with them. I just liked people, so it was a very, very happy time. I know that I was a strict teacher and I wanted a class that certainly was in the ambience of wanting to learn. Even though the students may have had a certain (quote) "fear" when I was the principal, when they came into my classroom, they knew that they didn't have any stronger defender than their principal-homeroom teacher!

Religion Classes in the High School

Riess: Are the religion classes intimate classes where you do have a chance to discuss questions?

Cunningham: Oh, yes. The classes were usually in two sections because they would be fairly large, say fifty, so then you would have a section of twenty-five. There was always discussion. In high school, it was never lecture at all, it was discussion, and back and forth, allowing for questions and so forth. I felt they couldn't learn otherwise. Of course, there would be assignments for studying certain areas in whatever book was the particular text for the subject.

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Riess: What did you do with students coming from non-Catholic backgrounds, or students who were in a period of questioning? Or would they not reveal that in such a situation?

Cunningham: Oh, you could usually tell and, of course, in some of these areas, it was a much more homogeneous group. For example, in the classes in San Jose, it was the girls who had come from the parish schools in the area, and they would have had more or less the same background. Even though they didn't come from Notre Dame schools, they came from parish schools that had other religious congregations teaching them and the curriculum would have been the same.

Now, in a boarding school or a school that had both commuters and boarders, you would find students, of course, with a background that had been interrupted by moving from one school to another. And there were non-Catholics, but fewer, of course, than the Catholic students, and they had to take the religions classes. They did not have to participate in religious services, but they had to be present in the classes.

With the older group, say the juniors and seniors, naturally there was questioning of "why this" and the famous phrases, "how come such-and-such" and "what if?" So you just had to learn how to field those and to answer down to the level of knowledge of those students.

Riess: Is that an interesting process? Would you look forward to that challenge?

Cunningham: Oh, yes. You had to try to remember what might be coming up concerning the particular subject matter for the next day or the next week, and what were some of the questions that perhaps students in previous classes had asked, or in the light of what was happening in the general world what might come up as problems to the students.

Riess: Can you remember any that became thorny, predicting what became the changes in dealing with the world that the Church finally worked out?

Cunningham: I can't remember now those questions that were great problems. I know that as the years developed and the world changed a lot even up to the late fifties when it was the last time I taught secondary school, there would be more questioning of the moral situation between boys and girls and that sort of thing, whereas perhaps in my beginning teaching in the thirties, there had been much more home instruction and a similarity of backgrounds and perhaps an acceptance of what an authority would say.

Cunningham: Gradually, there was an erosion. The students just didn't take what Sister said or what Father would say. (We'd have the priests come in, too, for a class a week. That usually helped give a diversion in their background and the questioning and the training.) The questioning became more on almost any subject--of course, in religion too.

Riess: People that age--and even more in college--think that they are putting together the ultimate, challenging questions.

Cunningham: Yes, but they turn out to be much the same. [laughter] Of course, ultimately they'd come around and rediscover the wheel that in the beginning they thought wasn't going to hold water. [laughing]

Riess: If an issue was too troubling, then would you send a student to the priest?

Cunningham: Or you would say, "Could we have a little talk after school?" Rather than holding the class, for example, if there was a specific problem. Of course, sometimes they just wanted to see how you would answer a question.

III PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF NOTRE DAME: THE EARLY YEARS

The Job, and Planning the College Tour

Riess: Just exactly how did you receive your appointment to the presidency? Did it come in a note, or did somebody say to you, "You are wanted down the hall?" [laughter]

Cunningham: As it happened, I got my notice of change over the telephone. I was called to the telephone by the provincial superior. She thought I should know that I was going to be brought down to the college and was going to take over the presidency of the college in the fall. (This was, I think, in June.) She wanted me to know for my summer planning that I would have to spend some time preparing for the role and coming down to the college and reviewing some of the things that were going on. I had been away from the college setting for only a year. I had been very familiar with the general work of the college, when I was at our high school in Belmont, although I had not been directly connected with it.

Riess: What about the president preceding you?

Cunningham: She was going on to further study. So all of the knowledge of the transfer was made then. Then, of course, I got a written note later, and then it was published throughout the province. Today you can get a transfer through meeting with the sister, or the team, or the team member who would be responsible for telling you of the change.

Riess: What does the term "team" mean?

Cunningham: There are three sisters who form a provincial team in our province right now, and that's more recent terminology. It used to be a (quote) "provincial and her council." But in this day of subsidiarity--

Riess: And management terms--

Cunningham: --it's now a team. So it's sometimes with one, or with the other that you are free to talk about your hopes or plans. If you wanted a change, or needed change, then it would be with a team member or with one or another with whom you would wish to talk. Then she would talk over and survey the situation and see if what you had suggested would fit in with the plans for everyone else. As I said, of course, twenty-five years ago, it was just simply by a telephone call. In those days, there was no "I don't think I can do it." Maybe I said that--probably I did--but that wasn't going to make any difference. [laughs] I was to come down and try it out anyway!

Riess: The school had gone through a number of changes. In 1952, it had started offering a bachelor's degree. It had been coming up rapidly.

Cunningham: Yes, it had been developing very, very well from the beginning of the change from a two-year college into the four-year. The administrations that had handled that changeover had done a very fine job, and full accreditation had been given to the college before I came on to the administrative post here. So it was a matter of simply continuing and working as the college program would develop, and the numbers would develop, and continuing to try to get funds to make possible what we needed to have.

Riess: Was that a key aspect of your appointment, do you think, getting funds? That really is what being president is in many colleges.

Cunningham: I guess my background here on the campus was one consideration that made it easier. Not only had I attended the college as a student, but I had lived here on the campus for eight years in my position as high school principal. That gave me an opportunity to become familiar with what was going on here in the college. I had been away from Belmont just one year, so my familiarity with this place would have made it an option for the provincial to choose me to come here.

The presidential work, of course, was cut out for me to continue to develop the college, which was small at that time, although growing, and to work with those who were directing the academic program as it had been set up and fully approved by the Western College Accrediting Commission. Then it was vital for the president to raise money for future buildings and facilities, for the faculty salaries, and to direct college alumnae affairs, and public relations. That was the pattern of work that I knew was to be mine.

Cunningham: I had done a minimal amount of that on the high school level. Although I certainly didn't have to do anything with fund raising, I had to keep up with alumnae associations and affiliations on all of the levels because the alumnae associations of the high schools met annually and we had a board in each one. So I had been familiar with working with alumnae.

Then I had to do similar work on the college level, with the College of Notre Dame Advisory Board, as it was then called. This meant bringing to the college people in business and industry and in the life of the Bay Area who could be a help to us in finance and public relations because they liked the college and liked what we did. So it was a continuing kind of getting acquainted with people and telling the story of the College of Notre Dame to various possible constituencies and trying to get them interested enough that they would come "on board," so to speak--literally to be on a board in one way or another--and to help us develop the programs that were going to be necessary to make the college a viable one.

Riess: This description that you have just given us is a very coherent description, but it is a hindsight description, is it not? That must not have been all that clear to you.

Cunningham: Of course, that is true. It wasn't all clear as it is now in retrospect, but I knew that there were things that I had to do and those were the things. How I was going to do them was a puzzle, because there is no book that you have handed to you, and you follow these directions.

Riess: Had some of these things not even been begun? For instance, the advisory board?

Cunningham: Oh, no, that had already started in the late forties and the early fifties. There had been an advisory board, and when I came in I knew that there had to be more work done with the alumnae. There was a great deal that had to be done there.

There wasn't any (quote) "book" or a handbook; you just had to look ahead and see. I talked to administrators and colleges similar to ours and they were very helpful. Then I decided I would simply have to "do my own thing," as we would say now, and take time out to go to colleges across the country, which I planned to do in the spring of '57 because I knew there was a national convention that I had to attend.

You see, I had to make up all of this, how I was going to work out my own development. I knew there was going to be a big meeting in the East of the NCEA (National Catholic Educational Association), so I arranged to go East before the

Cunningham: meeting and I planned a whole series of visitations to various colleges, including some very prestigious ones. When I think of my simplicity in arranging meetings with the president, say, of Johns Hopkins University, various Catholic colleges and universities in the eastern area! Every single one of them had a open door for me to meet with a top person in finance, in alumnae work, or in development: sometimes it was one person who did all, which was ultimately what I was going to do, and sometimes it was a person working in one or more areas.

I spent about six weeks asking questions similar in a sense to what you are asking now but, of course, somewhat different, as to how they operated, how they worked, and what advice they could give to a new president coming in, who had just come in! I had a seven-week internship that I made up myself.

Riess: Were your questions any more specific than that?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, of course, they were. I had worked that all out ahead of time, and I even sent a questionnaire on to the secretary of each president. I think only at Johns Hopkins did I not speak directly with the president--and it was Milton Eisenhower, if I remember correctly, who was the president. But why would I think it [Notre Dame] was going to be anything like Johns Hopkins? I just wanted a variation of backgrounds, of stopping off and seeing different institutions at work. It was just a wonderful experience for me.

Riess: Tell me what other ones you looked at across the country.

Cunningham: I started out in the Chicago and the Milwaukee area--St. Xavier College in Chicago. I'm going to be foggy because I hadn't thought of being specific on this today, but I know that was one because I stayed with our sisters in Chicago. Mundelein was another one, and also Rosary College. I also went up to Milwaukee where I knew somebody at Marquette, so I was visiting there. There was another one there that I've forgotten: Isn't that terrible? I'd have to check back on that [Alverno College]. Then I went on to Boston. Of course, I visited our own college there, Emmanuel College. I went to Regis College, there, and to Newton Sacred Heart College, to Cardinal Cushing College, all in the Boston area.

Then I traveled to Washington, D.C. I don't remember the order of my visits. I know I went to Dumbarton College, and to our own colleges, Trinity College, in Washington, D.C., and to Villa Julie Junior College in Stevenson, Maryland. I also visited the Catholic University of America. Of course I had

Cunningham: attended, as I mentioned before, the Pacific Coast branch, but I visited the main campus in Washington, and talked to some people there. Then I went on to New York, to Manhattanville College, and upstate to the College of New Rochelle, and to a college on a magnificent estate on the Hudson.

Riess: Marymount?

Cunningham: No, no, not Marymount. I am sure it was Mt. St. Vincent's. Well, it's been so long ago, twenty-five years ago. But that was my work enroute to the meeting, which was held in Atlantic City. That seven-week internship I simply developed on my own. I had so much material, not only from the answers to my questions, but brochures and booklets. Every kind of courtesy was extended to me; I can't say enough for the administrators of the colleges and universities that I visited.

Riess: Those institutions were all a lot bigger than CND.

Cunningham: Oh, of course they were. There were none as small as ours. Here in this area the Dominican sisters had been very kind. The Sisters of Holy Name College were remarkably helpful to us. I knew the presidents in this area, so it was easy to talk to them because I was here in the vicinity, but then to go--I know I also stopped in Denver, Colorado, I visited a college there. I went by train and plane across on my own. I was traveling by myself at this time. It was my own idea and I got full approval and financing from the provincial and, of course, from the college, to be away on a spring junket. [laughs]

Riess: The first four-year Catholic college for women was the College of Notre Dame of Maryland. Is that the same order?

Cunningham: No, it is not the same order at all. The name Notre Dame means Our Lady. The University of Notre Dame would be the "University of Our Lady," but it is called the University of Notre Dame. That is staffed by the Holy Cross fathers. Father Hesburgh is the most prominent and long-lived president, a wonderful man. Our congregation is the congregation of the sisters of Notre Dame of Namur, but any congregation could take the name Notre Dame, or a title of Mary. There is the College of Notre Dame of Maryland, although I don't know the order of sisters.

There are several other congregations of Notre Dames that aren't our order really. They have connections, in that their foundress had known ours, Julie Billiart, and her co-foundress. They took the same name, Notre Dame, but have a different set of rules and different customs and are not connected officially in any way--in a sisterly fashion, of course, but not in an official capacity.

Riess: Trinity?

Cunningham: Trinity is ours; and Emmanuel in Boston; and Villa Julie in Stevenson, Maryland. Those are our colleges in this country.

Riess: When did they become four-year colleges?

Cunningham: Trinity and Emmanuel were always four-year colleges; they began as four-year colleges; they did not have the type of history that we had. Villa Julie was a preparatory school for Trinity, and it was and still is a very fine two-year institution.

Riess: Because it had that relationship with Trinity it never went on to be a four-year college?

Cunningham: Probably it was too close to Trinity, and it wouldn't have been feasible since it was for those who wanted a special kind of career education. It began as a preparatory college, and a preparatory high school continued on there, too: Trinity Prep School, I think they call it, and then Villa Julie Junior College. Now they are entirely separate. It is a much more a career-oriented type of two-year college still, rather than a prep college for Trinity. It is in a suburb of Baltimore and, of course, Trinity is in Washington, D.C., so it's fairly close.

Riess: Why did Notre Dame here in Belmont start giving a B.A.? How was that decision made?

Cunningham: I think seeing the development of the area, that there were students who wanted to come here and stay on at a four-year college, just the fact that we were growing. The original document by which we were chartered in 1868 allowed us to have the full collegiate program, but we had held off until we could do it well. We couldn't do it well until we were able to build more and to utilize the total place here to its full.

The high school had been built in 1927-28 and originally there were to be college wings coming out from that; that would have been a complete educational center. But when the Depression came and the administration had problems selling the last of the San Jose property in order to pay for the new buildings at Belmont, it wasn't possible then to go into more buildings up on the hill. It wasn't really until we could pay to move the mountains in Belmont--and that was not until the later forties--until the debts of the new high school building had been paid off, that we were then able to assume a more aggressive building program and literally to move the mountains to put more college buildings up here. That was a financial concern. That had been started by the time I came in, and I had to continue.

Catholic College Proliferation in the 1950s: The Sister Formation Movement

Riess: Was it a boom time for colleges in 1955? It seems like there were a lot of small Catholic women's colleges in the Bay Area.

Cunningham: I would say that it probably was in the fifties, yes. The others were much larger than we were because we were just going into that four-year program, but we were able to make it and continue to develop, so we certainly had something that has appealed to people over the years.

Riess: In a book on Catholic higher education it said, "Between 1950 and 1960, Catholic women's colleges sprang up like dandelions after a spring shower. By actual count, fifty-six or almost four foundations per year--" et cetera. They questioned how successful one can be if it is that small.

Cunningham: The California colleges that you referred to, and CND, had already been established. What we did was add the third and fourth year--the degree programs--and then go into what some of the others did not have, an evening program. Of course, we were in a little different area from a college right in San Francisco or down in Los Angeles. They had already been established, and we too had been established but as simply giving the AA rather than the BA or whatever else. Then we continued to grow and develop from that time, as long as we felt we could do it well.

A college had to have graduating classes before it could even apply for accreditation, but at CND the academic quality was such that even the small quantity was not a deterrent to the full Western College approval and that, of course, gave us more encouragement. That was what I then had to try to live up to and continue to work with. I came into office with a very fine establishment already set. It was my work to help and to continue to strengthen, and to get more money and to do more development in the physical plant, the faculty and the facilities and with the freshmen--the three f's--and finances! [laughter]

Riess: This book goes on to say that between the mid-1950s and 1960s, 139 small Catholic collegiate institutions began.

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Riess: Probably a Catholic college could survive on a very marginal level, because of not having to pay its non-lay faculty.

Cunningham: That's what you would call a living endowment, the contributed services of the religious members of the congregation, and that certainly is possible if the majority of your faculty belong to the particular religious order. But as the religious faculty decreased in number, then there were fewer dollars for faculty salaries for the sisters. And, of course, from those salaries only the living costs were taken into the community, the rest was put right back into the college operating fund. So that's why that was called a living endowment.

Contributed services is something that has not been understood by many people, because for Catholic colleges to survive many assumed, erroneously of course, that "the Church"--and I am using that with quotes--supported every Catholic college. Well, that's absolutely false. The Church per se supports only one college--university--in the United States and that is the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C, It is literally supported by the Church in America. For the rest, we must make it on our own, and the only way we did it in those days was that we had more sisters than we had lay teachers. Today it is quite the reverse.

So it's true, the proliferation of the smaller institutions was very large in the fifties, and in those years most of the colleges had practically an all-religious faculty. But then when they weren't able to maintain that any longer, the college could collaborate with another college of its own religious congregation or it would simply have to close as has been the case with many because there were not funds from the Catholic population at large to support all of these institutions, nor could tuition be raised too high so that you would be pricing yourself out of any kind of competition whatsoever.

Another reason for the proliferation of the smaller institutions was the sister formation group that had been established by the sisters--Sister Mary Emil of the Immaculate Heart Order of Monroe, Michigan was one of the outstanding developers of that program--for the effort that all religious teachers should have a fine collegiate education. Now, that was only possible by a sharing of the religious education and training of those who had already been established in colleges, or by sending professors to a location where a group of sisters could come together and have a college education well-developed for them, even if it weren't their particular order that was sponsoring them.

But that couldn't go on indefinitely, particularly because of regional accreditation. It isn't sufficient simply to have a group of religious studying and getting what would be a degree.

Cunningham: The degree has to be a fully recognized one and it is only recognized if it is approved by the area accrediting commission. Of course, there are very strict regulations in faculty, facilities, funding, and academic program that a group of very fine men and women would have to come in and review. If the particular small college under review could not afford to maintain well and continue, then it could no longer survive.

Some of those small colleges were for sisters only, they did not take in lay students, so many did not continue. They were not able to go on financially, or to have a degree program that would be recognized. They simply couldn't throw money away. So then those colleges--or "colleges" in quotes--sister-formation colleges or training colleges, would have to be closed down if they weren't able to be accredited.

There were many of those institutions that began small; there were young girls, I'm sure, from the various areas who would go to these, but if they could not get accreditation, then it was certainly not to anyone's advantage to continue them.

Riess: I would like to clear up something here. I read about the Ford and Roy study.* One of them, Roy, came from the College of Mercy in Burlingame, which I had never heard of.

Cunningham: That's right. That was one of the colleges that began just for the sisters, but they wanted to have accreditation. Russell College it was called at the time [run by] the Sisters of Mercy in Burlingame. Those are the sisters who operate St. Mary's Hospital of San Francisco, Mercy High School out in Stonestown, Mercy High School in Burlingame, and a good number of elementary schools in the Archdiocese.

There are Sisters of Mercy all over the world, and each group of the Sisters of Mercy or a good number of them have a kind of connection with other Sisters of Mercy. They aren't the same as we sisters of Notre Dame are with our own international order. Theirs in Burlingame was really a much smaller group. I am not sure what it would be, certainly under five hundred in California, Nevada, and I don't know where else they may be.

They needed to have their young sisters get their degrees. So they did what we did for a long time, sent their young sisters to colleges, since Mercy didn't have one, where they could get degrees.

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*"The Renewal of Catholic Higher Education," Ford and Roy, 1968.

Cunningham: For example, some of them came here to Belmont. Not too many came here because we didn't have the four-year program until later, and the sisters needed their degrees as soon as possible.

One of the things that those who had founded this sister formation movement suggested [was] that if it were going to be a terribly great expense to send young sisters far away for their education, which meant tuition, room, and board and travel, perhaps those sisters who had completed their own educational background should bring the young sisters to a central place in their area and educate them there. Those were called sister formation colleges and there were some established that were for a variety of orders. Every order couldn't possibly have a college. That would have been impossible.

Sister formation colleges in the United States were supported by different orders. The Sisters of Mercy decided, apparently, to have here in Burlingame a small college that would take care of their own sisters. A good number, I suppose, most of the sisters were trained for nursing. (The Sisters of Mercy were both educators and nurses, whereas we are really primarily educators.) Therefore, they began a small college on their own estate in Burlingame, and they called it Russell College.

A study was made, and I think I am correct, as to whether that college could really develop into a strong, though small, women's college. We talked to the gentleman who came here and asked us about how we had been successful. Of course, we had never been just a sisters' college. That was a different thing. We had had studies made for three years before we went coed; Mercy was having a study to go from a sisters-only college to possibly a college for women. But the analysis and assessment showed that it was not going to be a feasible project, so that did not work out. I think that is what you are making a reference to.

Riess: Your sister formation curriculum began in 1964, according to the catalog.

Cunningham: What do you mean?

Riess: It is included in the theology department, but separate, called the sister formation curriculum.

Cunningham: I don't think we have that in our catalog. Is it listed in there?

Riess: Yes.

Cunningham: I just don't remember that particular item. [tape interruption to look at catalog]

This was for those who would have seen the options to come here and to get the courses that they should have as teaching sisters in their own community, and we provided some of those courses for them.

Riess: So you were getting into the competitive market?

Cunningham: Not really, because we were doing it for our own young sisters, too. But, for example, with the sisters at Burlingame, there was an opportunity for them just within a few miles to have come here. There were a couple of communities that had their sisters coming from San Jose and in that area, different communities that came here. Those sisters needed this and we as a more solidly established institution had this. Now I see what you are referring to here.

Riess: There is a Catholic accreditation group, is there not?

Cunningham: Not for colleges, no. Years ago, the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. sent out a group from the NCEA, College and University Division, maybe every ten years. In other words, it wasn't the kind of accreditation that we know today as the regional type of accreditation which is very important. There was an approval, which would allow a special affiliation with the NCEA. That has ceased for many, many years. There was no longer any need [for it]. But it was doing really what you were saying, trying to give a status or to work up to a status in smaller colleges to be "affiliated" with the Catholic University of America. If they couldn't pass that review, they certainly couldn't pass any very fine regional accreditation review.

But it wasn't official; you didn't have to have that to become a college. In other words, you could become a fine college without having been affiliated with the Catholic University, even if you were a Catholic college. And that wasn't a formal accreditation. It was an affiliation only and that has ceased for maybe fifteen years.

Riess: Did you go to any of the Seven Sisters colleges, or other private sectarian colleges on your trip in 1957?

Cunningham: Yes, Goucher. It's right near Johns Hopkins. I had sense enough not to go to Wellesley or those, although I was in the area of Wellesley, but I did go to Goucher because I was right there in Baltimore.

Riess: Books that you read on higher education in this country point out that practically every school was denominational once.

Cunningham: Yes, all the way back to Harvard.

Riess: Did you find that to be in any way a bond, the idea that most colleges had religious roots?

Cunningham: Of course, the majority of the colleges that I visited really were Catholic colleges, so that there was that similarity even in a contemporary frame of reference, except Goucher and Johns Hopkins.

Student Recruitment

Riess: What were your visions for the College of Notre Dame here? Did you have a vision at that point?

Cunningham: I suppose the vision was one of developing it and not just maintaining the status quo. I wanted it, as did we all, to be larger, to develop some areas in which we might be a little different at that time from others, for example, the evening division program that was begun here. We are the only Catholic college between the University of Santa Clara and the University of San Francisco. So it was to give an opportunity for more students to attend a college of their choice, should it be our kind of a college.

In the very beginning I did not think of a change to coed, because so many of the colleges that were similar to ours were also women's colleges. It was just a normal thing for me to have thought in the mid-fifties of continuing along those lines. It wasn't until later and after viewing the development of other colleges that it was brought to our mind that we should consider going coed. So I did not early on have that vision, if you call it a vision.

Mine was a vision really of knowing that we had to have more space and room. I think the vision had a lot of dollar signs around, because the tuition was practically nothing and we weren't going to be able to do what all of us wanted to do--to grow--if we didn't have more facilities and space available, and that meant a great deal of support and a great deal of money.

Cunningham: The initial work was through our alumnae association which, of course, I think was standard procedure for all institutions. You went to your own "family" first because they knew you well enough to be supportive of you since they had already received something from their alma mater.

Riess: Was the high school the source of most of your college students?

Cunningham: Oh, there was a goodly number. But like so many students graduating from the place that is right next door, many want to see something that is on the other side of the hill. [laughter]

Riess: So you didn't develop a population from--

Cunningham: Solely from that, no, from our own high school, no. It is true, there has always been a trickle, sometimes smaller than other times and sometimes larger, but we have never had a large student population from our own school here, and that is really the same report given by other institutions, that they don't get so many from their own that are right on the same campus, and you can understand it. We do regret it and wish people realized what was right in their own backyard, but again youth wants to have something a little different.

Of course, our recruitment program had to develop a great deal, and that was something that I knew we had to [do]. If we were going to build a college population, we couldn't simply sit back and expect people to come to us. We had to go out. Therefore, one of the great aims that I had, and that has been really productive, [was] to develop the admissions and recruitment program on the campus and give as much financial support to that division of the college administration as possible, to make it feasible for them to get out and tell our story and tell about the college and have prospective students visit us. That has been where our strength has come, in drawing students from all over.

Riess: Admissions and recruitment, were those paid positions, or could you keep drawing on volunteers for those things?

Cunningham: In the beginning, the admissions office was staffed by the sisters who had early on [taken] the principal administrative roles in the college. Then we brought in paid workers in the admissions office. The admissions, and recruitment, and registrar's office were all one in the very beginning, and we realized that that was just putting on too great a burden. We had to find the right people who were eager to do this kind of work as paid workers.

Cunningham: There were no volunteers really. Oh, we have had a few volunteers, even currently, who are willing to go out and attend a "College Night." If we cannot get our paid staff down to a particular place, we have several of those volunteers, but that is rare. We have really put money into the admissions office and separated it from the registrar's office, so admissions and recruitment are in one and the registrar is in another.

In the earlier days, when we were small, I as president, which is almost unheard of now, went around to do recruitment--out to the Islands. I traveled to many places, in California, Oregon, Washington and Arizona. We had a movie made, a very fine movie, in fact, it won a national prize, in the early sixties, and that was one of the ways we sent our word out. But I couldn't continue that travel. It was fun; I had a wonderful time going around to different schools and that was where, again, I met people who were just terrific and it was important that the president of a smaller institution go out. But that became impossible for me.

Realizing the Potential, Through the Faculty

Riess: Actually, in reading about Catholic colleges and particularly small ones, that sounds like it is more often than not the pattern, that the president is also the dean and scullery woman and picker-upper and just has an unenviable list of responsibilities. Maybe it was hard to develop a good administrative staff.

Cunningham: We had very fine administrators in the academic program. I never had to be concerned about that because we had very fine women deans, academic deans and then deans of students. I simply went to the committee meetings, aided and abetted and encouraged the development that these administrators were giving. And then they had their assistants, and those offices had been expanded considerably, of course. When we divided the offices, we got some very fine lay people in both the registrar's office and in the admissions office and [they] have been very successful in those areas. We had a very fine man in admissions for a long time, and we have had a wonderful young woman there, one of our own graduates, for a good number of years now, who has a fine staff.

Riess: Is there any reason why a sister couldn't have a job like that?

Cunningham: Oh, none at all, none at all. But it is just that there haven't been too many who have wanted that particular type of work, and so if you don't have the right person, you are not going to just put anybody in. You have to have somebody who just wants to do that kind of thing. Fortunately, we have been able to find a very fine staff to do that vital work.

Riess: Father Hesburgh was asked in an interview what his vision of his Notre Dame University was. He talked about understanding the resources, and then understanding the potential.

Cunningham: I think what Father Hesburgh said is true. What potential did we have here that would warrant us to go further than we were academically in the early fifties to develop the kind of education that we envisioned at that time specifically for women? (Although there were always some men in our classes, CND wasn't coed per se as we understand it now.) But what was there that we envisioned?

We believed in a philosophy of Catholic education, what it could give through a stress on the value system that other institutions of a secular sort could not always give by philosophy. That wasn't their role. We could encourage people to take religious education, and in fact, if they came here, that was something that they would have to take, and philosophy, and not be just partially educated. So the potential was there in the vision of the educational background of the sisters of Notre Dame to want to be engaged in that type of education.

Then I had to make it possible, with the staff that we had, to continue to develop CND, so that people who would come here would see what we were, what we wanted, and in turn, would want to be a part of that, too; they would want to be among those with whom they would be persons, and not just a body in a chair in a classroom, as you had to be in so many other large institutions. As I mentioned some time ago, when I was here as a young girl, the college enrolled maybe twenty-five or thirty. Now we are up to fourteen and fifteen hundred, and that is supposed to be our maximum as our board had planned.

Riess: You had a sense of mission.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, and it's a sense of mission that is tied up with the value system of a person. If we didn't care about that, I don't think we would be operating at all. We try to encourage that in people who come to apply for positions. They may not be Catholics at all. In fact, very often, people don't understand that a Catholic college doesn't have <u>just</u> Catholic teachers. We are a Catholic college in our basic philosophy and in our

Cunningham: aims, the aims listed in the college catalog, in our knowledge, and our purpose in the development of the Catholic background of religious training. But we also [want students] to know other religious denominations and what they offer people, even in the non-Christian environment, because the value system can supersede all of that.

There has to be a basis of wanting what is good, and there have to be people who want to teach that, and who want to be in that environment in order to make their teaching viable. They may be teaching biology; God knows, there have to be today fine strong moral aims in biology, and moral ethics in science, and in the understanding of the basic philosophy of peoples and the political situations in the world. But if you don't care at all about that, then you are not going to carry a value system through your institution, and that is what we are trying to do here at CND.

Riess: So when you interviewed lay teachers, you wanted to know that--

Cunningham: --they had our aims in the catalog; they see the format of our general kind of educational system. The academic vice president, the academic dean, all of those in charge of personnel, are encouraged to show, to explain, what we have done in the past, what we would want for the future. It is not that we would want to change people's religion, that is not in it at all. We want our colleagues, if they come here, to understand what we are trying to do, not to talk against any religious background but to develop together a value system that will be a strength for people in the future, whether they come here as older persons, returning men or women, or out of high school. Of course, more are coming now as older, as returning students, as you know.

There is an interesting insight into the development of requiring specific "Catholic" courses: for many years the courses in philosophy and theology were (quote) "for Catholic students only." In other words, we did not say, if you were a non-Catholic, that you <u>had</u> to take courses in philosophy or theology. The courses were there if you wanted them. If you were not Catholic, you did not have to take them. About fifteen years ago now, approximately, one of the accrediting teams visiting us pointed out to us that we were being restrictive in another way, and we were discriminating, by <u>not</u> making it obligatory for the non-Catholic students! Consequently, we limited the total number of units that were required.

Catholic students had to take philosophy or theology courses every semester. That became a burden, because then they had to take that many more over and above their major subjects. Consequently, we reduced the number that everybody

Cunningham: had to take, but all had to take some theology, or religious studies, as we call it, and some philosophy. Now, that doesn't mean the religious study of only the Catholic faith per se, but something within the context of those programs. So every student who comes knows that in advance.

In the beginning, I remember, I was skeptical. I thought, heavens, many people won't want to come here at all if they are going to have to take courses in religious studies or in philosophy. (This would have even been in the programs for the evening division, too, for those people who come after work, later in the evening.) "They will never agree to do that," was my feeling. We had been so open, so lenient in what we thought was a fair way of handling the curriculum for non-Catholics. "They would be in the atmosphere, but they did not have to take the courses." Now, we are told by the accrediting [teams], "You should require everybody to have the same opportunity, same courses in religious studies as Catholic students."

The faculty who teaches those courses, such as religions of Abraham, or the religious themes in the Bible, can make many fine points, and to my knowledge there have been no people leaving the college because they had to take courses like that. If they wanted this college because of what they saw here, then they would weigh that against taking a course that had a religious theme or religious overtone or values. In today's world, many want values, when they can't get them elsewhere, in education.

Continuing Education Division##

Riess: The evening division is a full-fledged degree program?

Cunningham: It was begun as an upper-division degree program. There was no college between San Jose and San Francisco in which anyone could get a degree in the evening. It was developed as a part-time program in the upper division. It would have been almost a financial impossibility for someone to put a four-year degree into two courses a semester, they would have been taking it forever. Making it a part-time evening program, upper division, there would be less strain, and people could take from one course to two or three courses.

Originally it began really later in the evening. Now there is a crossover up from late afternoon, up until 10:30, 10:45, 11:00 at night. It was really a seven to nine program in the

Cunningham: very beginning, considering that people would come after supper. As it developed, people were very interested, so we engaged a special director for the program. One of the sisters had begun it, and then ultimately the program was turned over to another administrator. Then with recruitment and publicity, and additional counseling, the evening division had to add more staff, and faculty. More people came to take the evening program but they said, "I don't want to go home from work, and then come back to CND." So we had to back track and have classes beginning at five. Pretty soon, some got out at three-thirty, so they could come from four o'clock. Now the campus is fully operative from early morning until late at night.

Continuing education is really what it is. We do call it "Evening Division" even though some of the classes are in the afternoon. The degrees given are the same, it is just that the logistics of the division are handled out of a special office because of the different needs and the counseling for those returning for education. All of them have their undergraduate work completed [underclass work]. The program includes men and women who wish to finish their college work--nurses who want to get an advanced degree, or who maybe have given up nursing, have been home for awhile and then want to go back to school.

Riess: Did you start that in your administration?

Cunningham: No. The evening division was begun in the Spring of 1955. I came in the Fall of 1956.

Riess: That must have been a saving grace financially, too.

Cunningham: As it developed, yes, because it added more students and, of course, though the students were part-time, they went through the whole program and then they would recommend it to others.

Business and industry in the area were very supportive of our program. We had classes for a good number of years off campus, at some large business plants, and at various military bases, for example at Lockheed, at Moffett Field, at Hamilton Air Force Base. Later, it was deemed better to rearrange the off-campus programs, and have people come here to the home campus. Even though we had sent faculty, and still do send a few faculty members out, the accreditation commission wants to be very careful that the kind of program that would be given off campus has the same quality control away from the home base; that isn't always possible. For example, you want people to have the ability to go to a library and study there. There has been a great deal of criticism of off campus programs in general.

Cunningham: There have been television class programs on business sites; we have joined with one that I think was operated out of one of the businesses in Silicon Valley, with TV classes by Stanford faculty, too. It was an intercollegiate kind of opportunity for workers right at their own place of business. We sent some of our faculty to be televised, as did Stanford, and those opportunities have been very good and probably were helpful to people. But is the quality exactly the same, and should we at CND continue to do that? We have decided not to.

Again, it is a great additional expense. We had thought about having off campus places at some other school sites. Well, you can't really maintain any program away from the college as well as you do right under your own supervision. So that development we have not pursued further. Rather, we concentrated on what we are doing here, giving more classes for returning students in the day time. It could be even in the morning for the women returning, the re-entry program. (We began it as a re-entry program for women, but some of the men said, "It's a re-entry program for us, too." [laughs])

So we felt, let's offer a variety of times for classes: if the students can come in the evening, and if we have courses in the evening that are just what they want, fine, but if there are courses in the day time and the older students are here in the regular sort of average, collegiate class, what difference does it make? They are in class; maybe they are registered in a special office, but they are taking classes that have top faculty in the day division.

Riess: That's interesting. So you might have some fifty-five year old man sitting in that class?

Cunningham: Exactly.

Riess: I should think the accrediting people would really question whether you can keep standards up when you are bringing along people who are that diverse.

Cunningham: I think that is becoming almost a pattern in all institutions today; there isn't the homogeneity that we had in the very early days when we were having seventeen, eighteen, nineteen-year olds in day time, and the forty-plus in the evening. Now they overlap and it has been advantageous to both groups. I think in the beginning, the returning student in his peer group was fine, but once he was to be in a class with those who had been in school all the way for x-number of years, he was a little concerned.

Cunningham: There was a concern also from the point of view of the students who were already there. Here were these older, well-educated men and women coming in from business and industry, who could be a challenge or a threat to the younger student. It has worked to the advantage of both. It has been an encouragement to the younger student to see the interest and eagerness with which the older students have worked. They have been a wonderful example to the younger students, who in turn have been kind of enjoyable companions in pursuit of education. The faculty have enjoyed having both in class.

Riess: This integrating of the older with the younger followed integrating boys and girls.

Cunningham: Yes, that's right. Of course, even when we began with the coeds in the late sixties, '67 and '68 in the beginning [when] it was fully coed, the evening division was much more (quote) "evening division" then. It was after we had become more fully coed that [we began having the continuing education all day long]--not because of that, but just as a corollary of the development of the faculty's reaction to the program and the fact that people were having different times to go to work and get off work, therefore, why should they have to wait until seven o'clock in the evening? We continue to give special counselling for the older student who had been fearful of changes.

Riess: They pay per class?

Cunningham: Per class, yes.

Riess: An equal amount with the regular students?

Cunningham: I have been away from the specifics of that for a bit, but that has been less. The rationale was that they had less general services than the student who was here all day long, so that there should be a lesser amount of money per unit than would have been, say, with the full-time student, the day division. But they are pretty close, and we try to be competitive with other institutions--not in this area, because there aren't any others in this area that have an evening degree program. We are still the one mid-peninsula. There is Menlo College, but of course they don't give evening classes. Stanford may have evening classes, but there is no degree program.

Riess: The day students don't picket outside your office and say, "We refuse to pay more for our classes than these [evening] people do"?

Cunningham: No.

Riess: It would happen at Berkeley.

Cunningham: That is probably because that was so free for so long that even the question of a small increase has been a problem for them. The younger students or the older students know that when they come to a private institution the state aid would only go to them if they could merit by scholarship and get some scholarship funds. But the school itself does not get state aid. Therefore, there is no question of protest at all; I don't think it entered anybody's head. If there had been a protest, it would have been from students who were here at a certain tuition rate and then would get word in the spring that it was going to be more the following year. They might have grumbled. Everybody grumbles no matter what, but then they say, "What am I going to do? I may have to pay more maybe going some place else." If they really couldn't pay, the financial aid office has made every effort to give scholarship aid to students for whom tuition or tuition increases have been difficult.

In business, for the older people, some have been able to get scholarship help through the business firms that have picked up the tuition tab for the student returning to finish a degree program. Those returning students probably had saved money from some work they had done, or from expensive opportunities that they let pass for now as they wanted to complete their education. But there was no student fee protest in that sense or in a large sense at all.

Riess: Do you think that you have lost a population of girls who liked the idea of going to an exclusive Catholic women's college on the peninsula?

Cunningham: I suppose we have lost some; I am sure there are some who wanted that. I would just not like to use that word "exclusive," because we never used that word in reference to the students here. If that was true, the only exclusion would be if they didn't have money to come here, and we didn't have scholarship money available in the earlier days as much as we have now. I would think we have gained more by opening up than we have lost. It is pretty obvious, since we have developed to almost fifteen hundred students, that we really haven't lost. Of course, it is an entirely different student body from what it was twenty-five years ago with just the young women and a few men that had come in into music and drama, for example. Now they are in every program or in any activity.

Changing Definition of a Catholic College

[Interview 4: October 14, 1982]##

Riess: The simple catalog description of 1952-54 was "a Catholic institution for the higher education of women," and after you had been there for a year, it was "a four-year liberal arts college for women."

Cunningham: The accrediting committee had come in '55, before my term began, and they had given a very glowing description of the newly organized four-year college and had been very satisfied with the work that the college was doing as a Catholic college for women. But as the fifties developed, and as general thinking developed, there had to be a broader definition of that; in other words, really catholic with a small c as well as the inference of Catholic with a large C. People would want to think of it in terms more of the academic and liberal arts rather than as, say, a seminary or a preparatory college for religious life, which some colleges, as I have mentioned in that sister formation program, were. They were only for those young people who were going to come to college and then become sisters. That was never the plan here, and consequently we wanted to broaden the definition to inform those who would look at it with a cursory glance, that it was a regular, academic, four-year program in the liberal arts conducted by the sisters of Notre Dame--and at that time, for the education of women.

Riess: I noticed that in '52-54 the description, the aims, were so paternalistic, it was as if it had been written for the parents.

Cunningham: I think now, looking back, we can see that. I am not sure that it was--I suppose it was planned. The parents would be the ones who would decide where their children would go to college, so they had to see what the program was at particular institutions to which their children had made application, and I would say now in retrospect that that is certainly true, there was that giving to the parents what we at College of Notre Dame had, that they could see for their children and then send the children to college. But that changed; the whole world changed in the late fifties.

Riess: There was certainly the sense that the girls would be taken care of.

Riess: Oh, yes; oh, yes.

Riess: [laughs] Looked over, guarded.

Cunningham: Yes, and that was, of course, what parents in those days expected, and it had been, I'm sure, traditional to many schools such as ours, whether they were two years or four years.

Riess: Actually, they got a lot for just a hundred dollars.

Cunningham: Oh, they got so much you couldn't even pay for it really when you think of it. They received individual attention because the classes were small and there were greater numbers of sisters. There were fewer, of course, lay teachers than there are now, but they were people, many of whom had worked at the high schools or in the college for a good number of years and had grown up with this type of institution. So they were able to give what the catalogs indicated, that very warm intimate kind of relationship to the students in a guiding way.

Riess: As styles have changed, that has been something that the sisters have been deprived of, that relationship?

Cunningham: It isn't deprivation. I know in talking to members of the faculty now they realize still, and are told often, that their influence is something special because of the values that the sisters have today. It is manifested to the students in a different way because the students now are at a different age level and from all walks of life, not just coming in out of high school, and it is manifested by the students in their relationship to the sisters who teach them.

Now, of course, if they don't have a sister they don't have that particular connection, although most of them probably would have a sister, maybe in history as a freshman. Or if they take some of these psychology and behavioral science classes, they would have one of the sisters or one of the priests. So they would still get that something special in values, which is really what we are trying to give them today, give people who could get other things elsewhere, but perhaps they can't get something special that is ours and special to our type of institution--but not in the same maternalistic [laughs] way of the earlier days at the college.

Riess: Would they be getting that something special in the class, or are you saying from advisors?

Cunningham: They would get it in both, because today our aims, our idea of values, is to infiltrate these into every one of the disciplines. This has been carried out to the faculty in symposia and in colloquia that have been held for the faculty--this is what we should give in our college classes where we can give it. Now,

Cunningham: it depends on a particular discipline, how you can bring out strengths and values in society that should be met today because of the values that we hold. Since the faculty have those values, it cannot help but carry over into their teaching (a), and then (b) that very development makes the student, albeit young or the older, want to perhaps confer at further length with a faculty member and, therefore, there is the one-to-one relationship. Especially when there are the concerns and deep problems in today's life, they really want to talk and many of them take time to meet with faculty. Then they are directed from the classroom to a friendly interactive session with any one of the faculty to whom they prefer to talk.

Riess: Those are certainly the virtues of a small college.

Cunningham: Yes, absolutely, so it's different from the old, but it's probably more intense today.

Riess: Because in the old days the students came with the values and the sisters then make sure that nothing was going amiss?

Cunningham: There was much more homogeneity in the student bodies of the earlier days because most of the students--not all, of course, but most of them--in the thirties and forties and, of course, the beginning of the fifties would have come from Catholic high schools and they were the traditional age level of students. So they would have had perhaps four years, if not the preceding eight years, of Catholic education. They would have come for the most part from families where there were very well set values, and ours was a continuation of that into their more mature years.

Nowadays, they come from such a mixture of areas and countries and cultural backgrounds and family life that reflect today's world. But there has to be a spark; I guess you would call it--I don't know--let's say a "pearl of great price" placed where the student can detect something that is a little special and then be drawn to that and get some guidance help or whatever counseling is available. This isn't just from the point of view of the sisters; it is from the lay faculty as well, men and women who have to understand, despite their own internal beliefs, have to understand what we, the College of Notre Dame, stand for and then be able to direct to another faculty member if their own expertise, personal or academic, isn't in that particular line. This is really what we have tried to inculcate in our faculty today.

Riess: How do you inculcate that in the faculty? You have said that you have meetings and so on to discuss it.

Cunningham: Earlier, when the college aims were re-established or reassessed, there have been reviews of the aims of the college at least every few years. Just this last year--not the present year, but the one before last--the faculty have been working in committee on the aims; this is something that is ongoing.

Riess: Is it from the faculty thinking?

Cunningham: Yes, and also from the administration because we have to say why are we different. Each year we meet again--why are we different? When the new faculty members are interviewed, they are given all of the books that pertain to the College of Notre Dame, the faculty handbook that has faculty, administration, and all of that material in it about the college, the catalogs, and various brochures. In those and even in the contract they sign, there is that idea that all here should uphold what the College of Notre Dame stands for. You can't uphold something you don't know anything about, and consequently there is a renewal and a reassessment of how are aims being implemented; this is an encouragement to the faculty.

There are two general faculty meetings a year, at the beginning of each semester, and there is I would say always a reference to aims and values, if not a special concentration, which there was last year, on this very subject.

Riess: Is that because it slips?

Cunningham: Not necessarily because it slips, but because we want to keep remembering that this is what we are about.

Riess: Then let's stick with that idea of the aims. In '52 and '54, some of the things I wrote down as the aims were "the complete education, socially, physically, mentally, morally, spiritually." You were going to take these individuals and try to help strengthen them in every area?

Cunningham: You cannot force the human spirit, but we had to be sure (and, remember, I was not in the college at that time, but I know it from my own work in the high schools) that we were of assistance in developing the young women who came to us so that they could be strong, not only academically, but in every other way that it was possible for us to help them.

Riess: It went on to say "learned and cultured women trained according to Catholic principles integrated with Catholic theology." I mean it was very clear.

Cunningham: Yes, and that was the case. Every Catholic student who came here had to take a varying number of courses in theology and philosophy.

Riess: Do you think back in those days the principle of free inquiry was prized as a way of coming to terms more with what you really believed? Were you interested in the student who challenged?

Cunningham: I am sure, knowing a good number of the faculty of that day and knowing some of the graduates of that time, there were always those who queried and questioned. I don't think that they probably did challenge as much as they might today because--I have to come back to it--today is a freer world. But from the type of person that each one was, certainly there would be questions. But we, the college faculty or the faculty of that day, had to be prepared to answer and to direct as best we could.

Riess: Yes, I was thinking about the lost sheep. [laughter] The lost sheep are always the favorites somehow!

Cunningham: There is no force. I mean people could put down on paper all kinds of things that they say they believed and then they might not have, also. We could not get into this area except in individual cases, but the aim was definitely there to develop and give to the students what perhaps could not be obtained in another type of environment.

Riess: By '65 and '58, the aims have risen above that "letter home" quality. But then this phrase comes in which I find syntactically difficult, "the development of the intellectual virtues as Catholic." Now, where is the word "a"--"as a Catholic?" What does that mean?

Cunningham: You have struck a phrase that the faculty have discussed back and forth, and back and forth. We have broadened it far more even today if you read the aims for today.

Riess: Oh, yes, finally this disappears, but it troubled me because the first time I thought it was a misprint and then I realized it certainly wasn't. It was obviously saying something very neatly, but what is it saying?

Cunningham: All I can say of it now is that it was typical of the times, and I am not claiming any responsibility for the wording. I don't remember the exact time. Was that in the catalog of '56?

Riess: Yes, it was '56-'58.

Cunningham: I just came in '56, so the catalog would have been developed and those would have been in the previous terminology. That terminology would have been used in a previous situation, but it is something that we in the college from that time on have argued with. In the beginning, I am sure the inference was that the majority, if not all--but I don't think it was all--the majority were Catholics on the faculty and in the administration. Therefore, our background was a unified one. So in order to reach that unification toward the students who came to us, we had this base we were building to develop their intellectual life as Catholic.

Riess: But not as Catholics?

Cunningham: No, but that is the trouble. That is the point, that that created the difference that you are pointing out. Some were taking it as catholic with a small c, which it should be in a sense, but then there has to be that other underlying idea, "as Catholic" in the sense of how were we special in the whole catholicity of liberal education. There was one main aisle down which we would go and offer the branches of education that stem from the way the liberal--and, of course, knowing education as you do, how much of it has come from Catholic with a large C, back in the Middle Ages and the strains that have come [from] there.

But as you will note in the later revisions, that phrase has been changed, because it did cause a problem in thinking how did we mean it or how did those authors mean it at that time? Then if we saw it down there, then what were we supposed to be assuming was our role in continuing these aims? Does that answer your question?

Riess: Yes, it does.

Cunningham: It was almost a two-pronged thing really, although I can't say that initially they meant it that way, but that is what emerged from the construction.

Riess: It would have excluded me; it would have clearly excluded me.

Cunningham: It wasn't really to exclude--

Riess: But I would have felt excluded because that is such a powerful word, Catholic. I mean that if it had said as a--

Cunningham: A Mormon?

Riess: As a Christian. Anyway, it's interesting because you know it is a powerful word.

Cunningham: Yes, that's right and it's true that that was, I'm sure, the initial point. As it said in the earlier booklet where you said "as a Catholic college for women," then the word "Catholic" was transposed into the aim in the sense as we understood it and yet--I am trying to remember any of the faculty at the time. I am sure there were a few that perhaps were not Roman Catholic as we know it, but if they subscribed to the philosophy, and while not believers in the theology, did not work against it, that is all we asked. If they were academically suited for our program and could, knowing what the purpose of the college was, honestly within themselves join the faculty and not undercut Catholic theology, that was fine.

Riess: You are reminding me actually that the faculty is the real key here.

Cunningham: Yes, that's right.

Riess: It is not what the students are coming to expect, it is what the faculty has contracted to teach. As president was the faculty directly under you, or did you work through a dean?

Cunningham: The academic area of the college has always been directly under the academic dean. Now the title is academic vice-president, but it is the same broad development and she--because it is still a she--was the one who initially would talk to the members of the faculty who were coming on to the staff and that sort of thing, whoever she might have been. There have been four in my administration.

Riess: Is that because they burn out and the presidents don't? [laughter]

Cunningham: Oh, presidents will begin to, let me tell you! Some deans went on to different things and a couple just realized that that aspect of administration was not something that they wanted; they preferred to go back to teaching. It wasn't that they burned out completely. It's just that administration perhaps was not their "thing."

Riess: When they were called upon to do it, they did it.

Cunningham: That's right, although none of them were <u>told</u> they were going to be; they were asked. Particular members of the faculty were called to become deans.

Cunningham: We have been--and I am going to use the word catholic in another area--a very catholic institution in that we have brought the problems that we have seen, no matter what they have been, to various committees that have been established for certain things. We set up a committee on aims later on. So I would say from the aspect that you are talking about that there wasn't any one person who came and said, "This has to be it." It hasn't been an autocratic kind of situation, it has been a cooperative kind of thing. Problems of this sort or discussions would have stemmed perhaps from the curriculum committee in studying the issues that arose in various semesters. Then there would be a committee decision ultimately. You have a copy of the governmental structure.

Riess: Yes, of the last decade.

Cunningham: It was still the same thing. If you look at the committees, there was always the administrative committee and the curriculum committee and that kind of thing. The administrative committee then was the one that would have, as a committee, the final say and would approve and confirm that which had to be brought to it. Some matters didn't have to be brought to the administrative committee; they could have been self-contained within certain committees. In other words, the administration would have given to certain committees the role to make their decisions, and then the administrative committee would affirm what had been presented. If it was going to be a vital decision that maybe ultimately had to go to the trustees of the governing board, then of course it would surface to the top, to the administrative council or administrative committee, whatever it was called at the time.

Riess: Decisions, you are saying, would rise up rather than come down.

Cunningham: Oh, yes. There could be a suggestion from someone. For example, the academic dean in discussing things with faculty might have picked up areas of concern or interest and then they would be brought to the committee that was in charge of that kind of thing.

IV GOVERNANCE, AND PLANS FOR GROWTH OF THE COLLEGE

Advisory Board Members

Riess: But to look back to the governing style of the place in the early fifties: there were advisory boards with archbishops and bishops, and the board of trustees which were all sisters, and some other very powerful Irish Catholic-looking names, if I may describe them that way. What were they doing?

Cunningham: The archbishop and, again, this was before I came to the college, the archbishop was on the board, and had been invited when the college became a four-year college. The first president of the college in its four-year capacity was a sister who had developed one of our eastern colleges, Emmanuel College in Boston, and on their board had sat Cardinal Cushing. So when Sister Helen Madeleine, which was the sister's name, came out and assisted in the development of our four-year college, the pattern of outside advisement was seen to include, since we were a Catholic (large C) college, if he so chose to come, the then archbishop, who at the time was Archbishop Mitty. Now, I am not sure--I don't have with me that catalog--whether he was listed as maybe an honorary member of the board.

Riess: Mitty was chairman of the advisory board.

Cunningham: That, of course, was before I came. Whether he ever came to meetings, I really don't know. There are, I suppose, some minutes of meetings, but I am really not able to answer that. I know that by the time I came in '56, Bishop [Hugh A.] Donahoe was on the advisory board and he did come, I know that. I imagine the archbishop assumed being honorary chairman or chairman and then would have been consulted by the president and the dean in those days. Whether he ever attended a full meeting, I honestly don't know.

Riess: The consultation would be pro forma?

Cunningham: Yes, I would think so, because this is again a pattern that had been established somewhere else. We did not have a background in having that kind of a board. We'd always had the trustees, of course, since 1868 but they had been the sisters.

Riess: Who are some of these people? Mr. John Burnett?

Cunningham: John Burnett was an attorney in San Jose, the grandson of a former governor, Peter Burnett. The college had come from San Jose, so some of our legal roots were there. Mr. Burnett had been an attorney for the college and he was still on the advisory board when I came.

Riess: Dr. Otis Callaway?

Cunningham: Dr. Otis Callaway was a prominent medical doctor, an eye, ear, nose and throat doctor here on the peninsula. He was very interested, as I understand, in the work of the sisters when they came here to the peninsula and, in fact, took care of some of their medical needs. He was a convert to Catholicism. Again, I am assuming that they realized that he was a prominent figure in the peninsula area, was a man who would be definitely interested in the new trend the College of Notre Dame was taking, and so he was brought on the board.

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Cunningham: He remained in practice for many years. He lived with his mother. He had never married, and after his mother died and he was getting older, he felt called to serve the Church in a special way and was accepted as a student in the seminary of the diocese of San Diego. He went down there and became a priest in his seventies.

Riess: What was the order?

Cunningham: No order; it was just a seminary, a diocese seminary in San Diego.

Riess: I thought that everything was run by religious order.

Cunningham: Oh, no! Goodness! All of the priests who are out in the parishes, they don't belong to religious orders. The Jesuits at St. Ignatius have belonged to the Jesuit order. The Dominicans in St. Dominic, the Franciscans at St. Boniface and St. Anthony's belong, and there are other orders, Marists and Marianists, but most of the priests in the archdiocese or diocese are diocesan priests. They are priests of the diocese in which they live and they can be sent from parish, to parish, to parish.

Riess: But their learning is not under the--

Cunningham: It's in a seminary situation, but the others who are studying to be members of a religious order, they have not only the studies for the priesthood, but they have the studies for their own religious congregation and must go through a different type of background and studying before they are ordained. Both have the same general type of theology and philosophy and the biblical studies, and all of the academic studies needed for the priesthood. But those who belong to a religious order are fewer in total number and they have special work and special years of study, too. Dr. Callaway was a member of the diocesan priesthood and, therefore, he went to diocesan seminary in San Diego.

Riess: I take it that is the same for the sisters?

Cunningham: No, it is entirely different.

Riess: [laughs] How unneat and untidy!

Cunningham: Sisters may belong to different religious congregations, and some, it's true, some work only in a certain diocese, whereas Notre Dame is an order that is all over the world. Some religious congregations were established just to work in a particular diocese and maybe they spread out to neighboring dioceses. For example, the Sisters of the Holy Family were established in San Francisco for the work of teaching catechism in San Francisco, but they are now in other states and other areas; whereas we in Notre Dame have come from the European scene and are all over the world now.

Riess: At the time that Dr. Callaway decided to take up the priesthood, do you remember his transformation or whatever?

Cunningham: He was a very sophisticated man who dealt with many, many people, of course, in his professional life and in his social life. But he just had received a special call from God. He felt, as I said, the obligation to stay with his mother through the years of her life, and then once that obligation was fulfilled by her death and her going home to God, as he would put it, then he was free to fulfill this desire he had had and to give up his practice as a medical doctor and to go into the priesthood. We have pictures of him as the layman that he was, Dr. Callaway, visiting us and coming here, and then taken later in his clerical clothes, when he came here later as an ordained priest and said Mass in our chapel.

Riess: Did he seem very much like a changed person to you?

Cunningham: Of course, we knew him so well. He was always a very outgoing person, very warm.

Riess: Because the roles aren't that far apart.

Cunningham: They were service, service to mankind in one way, and then a fuller service in a sense and that is what he gave. He was a very fine man.

Riess: The Chronicle had an article that I am sure you read about the Trappists, and the man in his forties who felt the call. But it seems to me it was a more radical change in his life.

Cunningham: To the intense contemplative. Now, with Dr. Callaway as a priest, he was free to move around and go around and do his service in the area which had been planned by the bishop of San Diego. That article on the Trappists was a very interesting one. It seemed very fair and very clear as far as I know anything about the Trappists.

Riess: Perhaps it shows also how the Trappists have changed over the years that that article was written.

Cunningham: Yes, exactly, but remember Thomas Merton probably had a lot to do with the work of the opening up--as well as the whole Church opening up, the idea of letting people express themselves in writing, in music or whatever would be their particular talent.

Riess: All right, Mrs. Marc Cremer.

Cunningham: Cecilia McCue Cremer was an alumn of the college. At all times we have had an alumna representative on the board, and Cecilia had been a student in Notre Dame, San Jose, and Belmont for all of her school life and through her college. She was chosen to be a board member and served many years on the board, very successfully.

Riess: Does that mean that you could count on her to do fund raising through the alumnae?

Cunningham: Remember, this was in the very beginning, when it was still the advisory board. We didn't have the intense kind of fund raising that we developed later. It was primarily alumnae giving, and that was one of the things she helped [with] and, in social events of the alumnae and keeping alumnae informed of what we were doing. She had been president of the alumnae association several times, so she served well in that capacity.

Riess: Dolorita Falvey?

Cunningham: Dolorita was a very prominent teacher and administrator in the public schools in San Mateo. If you remember from looking at our course listing and our program, we spent a great deal of time planning that we would be a very good teacher training institution, which we developed and have maintained. Dolorita was one of the primary persons responsible in working with the administration and setting up the planning of the teacher education program here at the college. She was a strong link with the public schools in the area, knew all those people who were top people in the administration here on the peninsula.

We had to become affiliated with all of the organizations that were serving the public schools because we were training the students--at first, all women and then later on the men--to go out into the public schools. So we had to have our contacts established, and Dolorita was one who worked with us and was a marvelous, marvelous source of strength to the college because she was very well thought of, knew everything about everything, and everybody in the field of education--teacher education, principally elementary education--and that was the basis for the choice of Dolorita.

Riess: Dr. Walter Gillogley?

Cunningham: Dr. Gillogley was a Catholic doctor here in Belmont, and he was one who was very interested in education. He knew the Belmont scene. So we had a local medical man, not just because he was a doctor, but he was connected with helping us set up what we would need in the way of health services here at the college. He very graciously accepted a position on the advisory board and again he served many years.

Riess: Was that also very politic, to have someone who was important in Belmont? Have you had a need to keep good relations with the town?

Cunningham: Of course, the college was here long before the town as we know it now came.

Riess: In fact, Belmont is the name of the estate.

Cunningham: Exactly, yes. In other words, the town didn't call itself Ralston. [laughter] It was Belmont when Ralston named this estate Belmont. It was his home and that was what he called it. "Come down to Belmont," as said Shakespeare. [laughter] But Dr. Gillogley was a very, very fine man in the area and knew the people and knew our concerns.

Riess: As far as town and gown goes, it is not like Berkeley and the university?

Cunningham: No, no.

Riess: Is it conflict free?

Cunningham: Conflict free as far as we are concerned.

Riess: How about matters of taxing and zoning?

Cunningham: Taxing doesn't enter into it because as a non-profit institution, we don't have that problem. We don't; maybe the city would consider it a problem, wishing they would have it!

Riess: That is exactly the problem that Berkeley has, that Berkeley occupies so much space and uses so many services.

Cunningham: Yes, but we don't. I mean there has been no overt problem with this. There may be people thinking [about it] of course, which you can't blame, and yet by virtue of the fact that we are here, it has given a certain status to Belmont. It's a college town, too.

Riess: Exactly.

T. Kevin Mallen, who is he?

Cunningham: Kevin Mallen has been with us from the beginning. He was the father of five girls who had gone through our high school, a very dynamic and vital man of Irish birth, with qualities of persuasion and dynamism and charism that you just can't believe. He just lights up a room when he comes in. He is just a charmer from the word go. Because he had certainly indicated his interest in the school by having his own daughters in the high school if not in the college at that time, he was invited to be a member of the board, and he is to this day. He is one of our trustees now and is on the finance committee. He has been helpful to us all of these years. He has great international interests.

Riess: What does he do?

Cunningham: He was a partner in Sutro & Company. So he was in finance and, of course, again that was something that we needed. We always would try to get those who would be advisory in whatever the expertise was of the man or woman invited to work with the administration. He not only had a great interest in the college but could certainly help us along in our financial development and planning. He is still on the board.

Riess: William H. McCarthy. Is that the McCarthy? [laughter]

Cunningham: Yes, that's my uncle. Now, you notice he was chosen as a board member before I was on the college faculty. Obviously, having a relative in Notre Dame who was connected with the Belmont high school at the time, he always had a great love for Notre Dame and for the sisters. Because of his own charism and dynamism, he had done a lot in fund raising in San Francisco, as I think I have told you, in connection with drives for the city, for the Red Cross, for Catholic causes and more latterly in his life for St. Ignatius College and the University of San Francisco. He was one of the founding regents of that university and was, again, a financier and one who had many, many contacts in San Francisco and the Bay Area. So he was asked to serve, which he did until his death.

Riess: The Honorable Francis Murphy?

Cunningham: I really didn't know Mr. Murphy. He was an attorney from the San Mateo area. I think he was a judge, but I really had no personal relationship with him.

Riess: I did not list the sisters, yet it would be interesting to know why they were the trustees.

Cunningham: The sisters that are listed there are those who were trustees some by virtue of their office at the time, and some by choice of the Board of Trustees themselves. In the earlier days as you know, only sisters were trustees--it was just simply a fait accompli that when you had a particular position in the congregation as a provincial, or one of the counselors, or on the college staff, that you would be also one of the trustees. It is only in the latter years, in the sixties, that we brought in [lay members], because there was nothing in the bylaws that said, "You have to be a sister of Notre Dame." It was just simply like members of a family who would be the ones who would be the legal representatives of a corporation. The sisters--all of the sisters who are on it even to this day--are the legal members of the corporation as today are some of the lay members of the board.

Riess: How about the provincial and the superiors and so on, how does that fit into this?

Cunningham: Of course, initially, for many, many years in the time of the inception, the provincial--that is, the sister in charge of all of the sisters in the province, no matter how many states it spans, and from the first date, of course, it was just the area of California, she would have been a trustee, of course, who was ex officio.

Riess: She would have been one of the sisters who was a trustee?

Cunningham: That's right and the local superior of the community of the college would have been voted in as a member of the trustees.

Riess: Were they more or less powerful than any of the others?

Cunningham: Their roles were different.

Riess: In other words, sort of deferred to.

Cunningham: In the way you deferred to someone who has a special title. They were the religious superiors of the province, in one instance or the community in another and, therefore, they would have a very special concern for the development of the College of Notre Dame.

Riess: I was thinking when I visualized Archbishop Mitty, the chairman, how just automatically you might turn to him and say, "What do you think, Archbishop, and what do you think, Sister," as if that person by virtue of their role in another community gets more power on a committee like this, on an advisory committee, where really it's not their expertise but their aura.

Cunningham: Of course, it was the sisters as trustees who would have had to make final decisions for major things connected with the college such as, for example, making the step from the two-year to the four-year program, or going into a debt situation where we would have had to borrow money to put up the first new building for the college, that sort of thing, because they were the legal owners of the college or the ones legally responsible. They had to make the votes yea or nay.

Their vote for whatever issue would have been based on what they would have heard from many, including the archbishop. I am not sure that he was called on that often except in the very beginning when he had to know that College of Notre Dame was going from a two-year to a four-year program and we were reaching out into the community over which he had jurisdiction. So his advice, his interest in a Catholic institution would, of course, carry some weight, I am sure. It doesn't mean even then that we would necessarily have done [as he suggested]--unless it was some order that he would have had to give and that would have been rare. There wouldn't have really been any incidents like that that I can think of.

This was an advisory group to the trustees who were sisters, as the college was developing now not as just a small college in a small city, but as it was going to branch out. It was

Cunningham: beginning small, but we knew it was going to develop. Therefore, we had to reach out and had to confer and take the judgments for our decisions based on what we heard from those whom we asked to give us advice.

Riess: Were these the sisters who were your best educated, most sophisticated?

Cunningham: From the point of view of the provincials, they certainly had had a very fine education. They did not have doctorates, but that was the beginning, as I mentioned, of the emphasis on having sisters get into the doctoral program. Younger sisters were sent on. These women were older and therefore had master's degrees for the most part and would have had the credentials as teachers but not necessarily doctorates. Some of them did, that's true.

Riess: I like what the accreditation board said in 1955--findings--that it was (quote) "not that oppressive brand of seriousness... beautiful atmosphere, the stillness is alive." It is almost as if they came in expecting the place to be one thing and found it to be something else.

Cunningham: Yes, I think that is what happens to many groups that come in to review the academic standards as developed in what they would consider a very small institution. They have preconceived ideas from reading or making false judgments after reading things--I don't know--and I think that has been one of the delights that we have had, to show these very worldly lay experts that the College of Notre Dame could meet all of the standards that had been set up for a different type of institution such as public institutions, that we were not behind any of them. We might have been smaller, but we could be just as excellent, and that was a revelation to many of them.

I don't know what some of them would have expected of the sisters, or of the students who had been taught by the sisters, but the accreditation reports are all there for you to see, from '55 up to '80. They have all been delightful. They have enjoyed the work and they have had, I suppose, many revelations themselves, because they have been brought from all over the West. We never had anything to say about who was going to be on an accrediting team.

Riess: You might get a little tired of people making those wrong assumptions about the place.

Cunningham: I have had a lot of experience in trying to reassess their thinking, and let them understand that it isn't exactly what they might have thought when they came. But it's true, I have heard the same misapprehension or misconception repeated very sincerely year after year after year.

Finance

Riess: Had finance been so much the work of the president before your term?

Cunningham: For my immediate predecessor it was on a smaller scale than today, because we didn't have to buy property, we had property. It was a matter of putting up the new buildings, of literally beginning the "moving of the mountains" up behind the Ralston area, to build residence, library, dining hall and classrooms, and to have them completed by the first accreditation. The province and high school contributed to the needed funds.

As I came on the job in 1956, we had beautiful new structures on the mountain hill: the new administration building, the new residence hall, the administration and classroom building, St. Mary's Hall. As we began our intensive recruitment program, we were getting more students. We had students living in this very building in Ralston Hall: this was a secondary residence at the time because, first of all, students were in Julie Billiart Hall, and as the numbers grew, Ralston Hall had to be reassessed to allow the overflow. A dining hall and library, of course, had been built in the area at the top of the hill, but it became too small. So we had to be using the dining room down here for resident students, as well as what was really a cafeteria up above.

The administration that preceded me had planned that there had to be further development. We could not have the accreditation until those buildings were completed and until it had been seen if it was possible fiscally for the college to go ahead in now the late forties. So that had been accomplished by the administrations that had preceded me and had done very well.

But even as I stepped in, the classes were beginning to grow and we had to put them some place. So, again, Ralston had to be considered for use then, which meant that again we couldn't keep residents in Ralston. I think it had been already suggested that there be another residence hall. So one of the very first things I had to do the first semester was to begin work, to get what was then set up as a possible government loan to put up the new residence hall, St. Joseph Hall, and then a larger dining hall.

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Cunningham: I worked very hard to develop the alumnae association from an organization that really had just minimal financial obligations to the college to one which was geared to giving strong financial

Cunningham: support. The importance of an alumnae association to the alma mater was one of the things that I had found on my thirty-college tour of the United States. That was a very important part of my role.

Then through my advisory board and other advisors connected with the college, [there was an attempt] to develop friends in the Bay Area who could be of strength to us now as we were growing larger, and to get into the organizations and associations that would be a source of funding for us, and to set up a development program that would be professional and would be a right hand to me. I realize from my work in the eastern part of the country with the various colleges, the smaller colleges as well as some of the larger, that we had to set up a development office with a base that could help now with the building program, and then with a board, and this was the beginning of our thinking toward a different type of board.

Riess: Was that the first government loan that the college had applied for?

Cunningham: Yes.

Riess: Was that hard to do? To look in that direction?

Cunningham: No.

Riess: There has always been that amazing self-sufficiency.

Cunningham: Yes, but the government by that time was realizing that it had to make opportunities for institutions of higher education. It was up to the states, I think, to take care of the elementary and secondary. The federal government began government grants in the Johnson administration really, I think. Educators of the country realized that they could not go on on their own, so the government would have to give help. It wasn't to give handouts; it was to give loans. They were to be long term at low rates of interest.

We had on our board a Mr. Edward Keil, whose name you see listed in that catalog, who came on our board. He had been recommended to us because he was a good lawyer in the city and was a specialist in the work of bonding and anything related to government kinds of financial connections. So he willingly came on the board and it was through his firm, the firm of Keil & Connolly, that that first government loan was obtained. It took a number of years, as you can tell, for the finalization of the building, but we learned of our loan approval within a year, and then there was a year of building. Working under government

Cunningham: constraints is not very easy because you have to conform. It isn't just like borrowing money from the bank and then using it as you please. We had to have very strict accounting set up, and if you read over the minutes of the trustees of that time, it is all very, very legalistic because the minutes are such as would have come out of a lawyer's office, and that's what we had to present to the government.

Riess: Do you mean the whole institution was under government scrutiny once they were giving money?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, and we had to be sure that the buildings did not have specific religious uses. Granted that it was a Catholic institution of higher learning that was run under the auspices of a Catholic religious order, because of that there was no restriction that we could not be given the loan. That problem came up later under a famous case called the Maryland case, but we won't get to that now. Within the confines, or the structure, of the loan, no part of the money could be spent on anything except for the residents, and the food service for the dining hall. The loan could not support a chapel. There could be no religious connotation to the use of the building. It had to be specifically for what we said we needed, a residence hall and an enlarged dining hall.

Riess: You would need an attorney's help to even consider applying for this loan.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, absolutely. There was no way you could have done this alone.

Riess: Did your uncle or did you have any direct connections in Washington so that you could at least feel people out and find out whether this was going to go?

Cunningham: By that time my uncle was really retired from any active participation. He was still on the board, as I remember it, but he had become rather ill. But he had given advice to us and, in fact, it was he who recommended that we talk to Mr. Keil. So in other words, it was a transfer of the interest that he could give. He could give his money, which he did ultimately. But at that time, he wasn't free to give the college the active service that he had in the past and that is where then Mr. Keil and his friends stepped in.

Now, of course, you have to work through the connections with your congressmen in your area and your senator in your area, the state senator. So those connections were made through the firm of Keil and Connolly and they were the ones who handled

Cunningham: all of the business end of it. We had to meet with them innumerable times. All the bidding, everything that was so technical, fortunately was handled through the firm. You couldn't do it otherwise.

Riess: Did you attempt to understand it all? It certainly put you in a much better position if you could.

Cunningham: Oh, you can understand it, but you couldn't handle it. The legalese, to begin with, is another language. I had to meet, of course, with the government officials in their offices in San Francisco. I had to go to the HUD office there, I had to go up to the bank, I did everything with the attorneys. I was there with them, but they did all of the necessary ground work and spade work. Then we'd meet with the trustees, with the administrative council to explain what we were doing, because this was our first time in this big business kind of thing.

Riess: You would always go up to the city for these things?

Cunningham: Or they would come down to the college, either way, both ways. It was no problem whoever did what, but I mean I went up to their offices or they would come down to see the site. We had to talk to the architects and all of that sort of thing. So it was an exciting kind of thing and I was thrown into it immediately because we were beginning to develop into a growing and a viable institution then.

Riess: Was that the building that Vincent Raney designed?

Cunningham: Yes, he had been the architect of the initial buildings on the upper campus.

Riess: How was he chosen?

Cunningham: He happened to live right here in Belmont, in fact near the college. He had a daughter who went to the high school and so he was invited by the then administration of the college to serve as architect for the initial buildings. (Again, that was something that I wasn't connected with directly.) When it was my turn to begin a second building program, I just turned to Mr. Raney and worked with him for the construction of St. Joseph Hall and the enlargement of the dining room.

Riess: The fact he was connected with the campus, or the Church, does that mean anything?

Cunningham: True, he was a Catholic, but that was not any reason for the choice. He had been the architect and was already kind of on call.

Riess: Did you get his services for less?

Cunningham: No; it wasn't that kind of thing.

Riess: It wasn't his way of tithing or whatever.

Cunningham: No, no. Of course, with the government, when there is that kind of building, all of the money for the architect, for the attorneys, all that is built into the fee. So they are paid fully just as though they were building for any other institution that was not a Catholic institution. They simply served us because they wanted to help us and were interested in what we were doing, but they got whatever they would get no matter under whose auspices they were doing it.

Riess: I notice in the 1957 annual report a Ford Foundation grant of $100,000.

Cunningham: Yes, that grant had been obtained at the end of the administration that preceded mine. Sister Teresa Augustine Donnelly, who had been my immediate predecessor, had already begun work on it and had obtained that. That was when the Ford Foundation had indicated that there would be money available to colleges for faculty salaries, and so the then administration applied for it and we had been granted $100,000, $50,000 of which came in that year. That money, the $100,000 that we had, had to be held for ten years without touching the corpus; only the interest from that grant was to be used for faculty salaries. It didn't, by any means, give us all we needed for faculty salaries, but it was a help, and we actually kept that $100,000 in the endowment fund just until last year. We were free to use it for a good number of years, but we didn't.

As we had other building projects here on the campus, just recently the new president Sister Veronica, and I talked about it. I said, "There is no reason that it can't be used. I simply was able to hold onto it, but if it is going to be of use now, there it is. That is what it's for." So that was touched only in 1980. For twenty years we gathered interest from that $100,000. That was the first big grant that was given to the college from the Ford Foundation.

Riess: That's interesting. Did the Ford Foundation have any restrictions on it?

Cunningham: No, only on the time line of the use of the $100,000. It was for faculty development, that was the restriction. So we used it to assist us in the raising of faculty salaries.

Developing the Alumnae/Alumni Association

Riess: Okay, you were starting to describe to me the other ways that money was coming in. The alumnae association was already organized.

Cunningham: Yes, there was one, of course, because the alumnae association, remember, would have come to the College of Notre Dame, Belmont, from its earlier days in San Jose. That was typical of colleges all over the world, of institutions such as ours; the past graduates would come back to meet one another, and meet with their faculty. They also held an annual alumnae meeting, as well as a tea, and some sort of party once in awhile. It was really initially just a get-together for the past graduates of different classes and it developed that way. There would be a president of the alumnae association, a secretary, and a treasurer who would be responsible for collecting dues, in the very beginning.

I could see, obviously, that that kind of organization would no longer be sufficient for the college. We had a crossover of students who came from old San Jose and who were still members of the College of Notre Dame Alumnae Association. We had students who went to our high school who, before CND was a four-year college, were incorporated into this Belmont alumnae association. Then, we were going to have those who came only to the college and who didn't belong to any other alumnae group of Notre Dame. So we had to study what other institutions did in their transitional periods of alumni/ae reorganization. That was one of the problems I studied when we joined the American Alumni Council.

Again, that was one of the areas I questioned in my visiting the colleges and the universities on my own, how their alumni associations operated. Of course, most of them had been in very good operating conditions for many, many years and so it was on that idea that we based what we did. We were going to have to make a decision that those who attended only the high school in Belmont could by a certain year--I think the date was probably '58, I'm not exactly sure--make a decision whether they wanted to stay just with a high school alumnae association only, which was then to be organized, or whether for some reason or other they wanted to belong to both high school and college groups.

An election was held by a ballot given to all with whom we had any contact, so that all those from that year on--it would have been probably around'58--well, from the first four-year graduating class of '53 in the college, would belong to the College of Notre Dame Alumnae Association. Those who had attended the Belmont high school and who had elected to continue with that association could do so. Then a separate high school association was set up, and is a flourishing one.

Riess: Were there a lot who elected to continue with the college?

Cunningham: Yes, there were a good number who did because they had ties with the school for many, many years.

Riess: Of course, you knew what you wanted to have these alumnae do.

Cunningham: They had to be supporters for us, and their first alumnae fund was for the furnishings for St. Joseph Hall, which was just then under construction.

We joined the American Alumni Council and that had many ideas helping us in how to encourage the alumnae. The alumnae president and other officers were sent to various meetings of general alumni affairs. I went to meetings, national and area, of the American Alumni Council, and sent the alumnae board members to them as well, so that they would have a feeling of now belonging to a group that had to do a lot more than just have a tea once a year where they would chitchat about their families.

Alums really had to be of service to their alma mater, and since they had received a good education, evidenced by their career, and the fact that they wanted to belong to the alumnae, then we stressed that we would depend on them to be strong supporters, and lend a right arm to all projects. It was no longer going to be a three-dollar a year alumni dues group. They were going to have to contribute to the college needs.

All would now belong; anybody who attended the College of Notre Dame would be a member in good standing, if they had attended for a semester. They did not have to graduate, but they had to have attended and left in good standing, and that still holds for any student attending the day division, or the evening division, or graduate programs. Then it was up to us to begin a public relations drive with all our alumnae through communications brochures, bulletins, personal contact, setting up of chapters to let them know we needed them, and that "since we had served them well, they should and would now serve us well."

Riess: Did you develop very strong workers among that group?

Cunningham: Yes, yes.

Riess: Can you think of any women in particular?

Cunningham: I can think of one special one right away. One of the most dedicated and outstanding of our alums who had spanned those years was Ruth Adams. You may have seen her name listed as

Cunningham: being a regent of the College of Notre Dame. Ruth is still a very active member of our alumni association.* She was the first woman principal in San Francisco public schools, becoming the principal of Washington High School in San Francisco, and so had herself an excellent role and prestige in the academic world, the secondary world. She is vitally interested in many organizations, education-wise. She did a great deal for the alumni and was really a bridge between the alumni association and our governing board. She has been for many years and still is one of the strongest arms of the alumni association.

Riess: Did you, in developing the alumni association, try to develop the wealthiest graduates first and encourage them to bring in others?

Cunningham: No, I don't think you could say that at all. The alumni board choose their president and officers from a nominating committee; it isn't an appointment of the college president, it is a choice of the group, and money per se has nothing to do with the nominations. It is true that on our governing board there are some with a connection with the wealthy who can serve us that way, but we try to ask all of the alumni to give whatever they can because, as the American Alumni Council showed us so well, it isn't always the amount of money that is given by an alumni association, but the number who participate in annual giving--the percentage—and that is what we have emphasized through the years. "Give something; give what you can, but give!"

We have received some very substantial gifts from alums who really have never been on the Belmont campus because they were older women--I mean they were in San Jose at the time. But you can understand that, since we only came into the four-year program in the fifties, those younger alums today, many of them, unless they came from wealth, wouldn't have much yet. It was the older women who gave large sums, and those were very few. For example, Miss Alice Turel of old San Jose was very wealthy; she was a very simple woman whose interests had been connected with Notre Dame High School in San Jose from the time she was a young girl. She made a very generous bequest in her will to us.

Also, a Mrs. Beatrice Mesmer Standish, who died only last year, had been one of our older alumnae and had never set foot as a student on the Belmont campus--I am not sure whether she ever served on any board--she was a devoted alum, and a generous donor.

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*Beginning with the coed period, alumni association replaces alumnae association.

Riess: They would have been developed by the alumnae association?

Cunningham: And by the sisters whom they knew very well.

Riess: In fact, the endowment and the willed gift is the most important.

Cunningham: Yes, that is correct. Naturally any organization studies the financial potential of its constituency.

Riess: This was a new and different world of business that you were getting into.

Cunningham: College is the business of education and not only is it the business of education, but you have to have finances to finance the business. So this has become the work of college administrators in general, and of the office of the president in particular, of development groups and of boards. They have to. I mean you couldn't survive otherwise, unless you were like Harvard that had some fantastic endowment and you didn't have to worry--although I think even Harvard has sent out many appeals over all of the years. We were just coming into the necessity of going out for money.

Of course, we had the contributed services of the sisters. That was the living endowment, and I think I indicated that before. We couldn't have operated at all without that, if the salaries of the sisters couldn't have been turned right over to the institution.

Riess: In your annual report you listed that as a $75,000 item, the faculty services.

Cunningham: Yes, it varied in different years.

Academic Committees and Curriculum Work

Riess: Did you have strong administrators underneath you or did you have to do some administrative organizational work?

Cunningham: Do you mean for the academic?

Riess: For the academic and whatever administrative committees.

Cunningham: That had been very well established through Sister Helen Madeleine, Sister Teresa Augustine, Sister Rosemarie Julie, administrators in the period preceding me, who had worked very, very hard in developing a very good college, moving from the

Cunningham: two-year program to the four-year and putting up the first buildings on the hill. In order to get accreditation, administrators had to be topflight people, which they were. My work was to develop and direct further for financial strength. As we were getting more students and more interest in other majors, the academic direction had to come through the administrators for those areas.

We had as the academic dean when I came in, Sister Gerard Marie, now called Sister Kathleen (she went back to her original name), who had just come into that office. Sister Rosemarie Julie was a tremendous director working in the teacher education division. We had already been accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Also we were empowered to give teaching credentials through the California State Department of Education. Those two accomplishments had been met. I think the California State Department of Education gives only a three-year term in the beginning, whereas the Western Association of Schools and Colleges had given five. So then we were soon going to have another review for the teacher education program, but that I did not have to worry about because there were very fine people, Miss Dolorita Falvey and Sister Rosemarie Julie especially. They had worked on the initial review and went out to develop the program, which was a very successful program.

Along academic lines, Sister Gerard Marie and the curriculum directors, with the chairmen of the departments, had to go forward with the excellent programs. The curriculum committee had to see where the interests lay among incoming freshmen, and to discover the types of majors that we were beginning to find would have more interest than others.

Riess: Actually, the curriculum committee sounds like an interesting committee.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, that is a vital committee for the academic. I did not chair that. I served on all committees, of course, ex officio.

I chaired on the administrative council, the rank and tenure committee, and, of course, chaired the finance. Those were mine to chair and supervise, and of course, to work closely with the board of regents and the board of trustees. But along academic lines, we had very fine faculty and academicians who handled the curriculum very well, and they were the ones who had to attend numerous committees, and go to conventions on their level of expertise as I was doing for the work of the president.

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Riess: That is an almost opportunistic thing that you are describing, trying to figure out what are the attractive majors to offer and so on.

Cunningham: And trends that keep coming up in education.

Riess: Right, and yet keeping clear at the same time about what is appropriate for the college to offer, and not to just follow trends.

Cunningham: I don't think we went off on too many areas--the trends were basic! For example, there would be different types of science that people were interested in more than other types. Therefore, maybe instead of having one as a minor, should it be a major? There were varying interests in foreign languages.

Riess: What if interior decorating or some sort of beavioral sciences or criminology or something were the fields that were in demand, and you could offer them and you would secure a funded academic niche?

Cunningham: It depended. Now, you mentioned behavioral sciences. That was one of the earlier changes to a very strong major. There was a great deal of emphasis, as you know, in the world on social work, and so that is one of the strengths that we had and developed further, one of the departments that even today is one of the largest and strongest in the college.

Business, too, is another development. Where initially business was just simply secretarial science, shorthand, typing, and dictation, then all of a sudden we realized that with the beginnings of Sputnik and all those scientific advances, that training of secretaries wasn't going to be what we needed to stress. It's true, we did keep up typing for a long time, perhaps further than we might have, because we had a faculty member, one of the sisters, who had taught typing very well for so many years and everybody needed typing for term papers and that sort of thing. But that has gradually ceased to be one of our concerns. Typing skills could be obtained elsewhere.

It's true that we did have home economics, and dietetics, also a new development at that time, and, as I said earlier, the social services, which now we call behavioral science. So when I say trends, I am talking about trends in the solid educational line. What was the world doing that we would have to get in and train people to be cognizant of?

"Thinking College-Wise"

Riess: In your annual report in 1957, you emphasized the new and effective recruitment program.

Cunningham: Yes, through my work with the American Alumni Council, with the American Council on Public Relations. I had joined the top organizations that four-year colleges and the boards had to be alerted to because there are national groups that give colleges a lot of help. Maybe one doesn't go to every national meeting, but then there are those that are area and regional. So that was something that I encouraged, not only for myself, but for those who belonged to different areas in the college; they had to keep alert to the various needs, various directions, and, of course, one of them was recruitment. Recruitment was, and still is, a national necessity. There are many colleges for which it has been the way of life, particularly for those institutions that needed athletes. Most of us, colleges such as our size, did not have an outgoing, big, expensive recruitment program, but I realized we had to develop a better one because the competition was something that we were going to have to face, in part because some of the single-sex colleges were going coed and that was going to make a difference with us--

Riess: Like Santa Clara?

Cunningham: Yes. So other schools other than our own had to know about us. Therefore, we had to build up an admissions and recruitment office that would bring our story to many, and one of the first things that we did, interestingly enough, was develop a movie, called "Thinking College-wise."

We got one of the top men in the academic theater world in San Francisco, Dr. Fenton McKenna, who many might know in that field, to give us advice on that. (He had been on our board for awhile. I think you might have seen his name there.) He was the narrator of the movie, and he has a marvelous voice. One of our sisters, Sister Mary Dominica, who had written Willamette Interlude, did the script for "Thinking College-wise," and we got a very fine movie company in San Francisco to shoot it.

Now, that meant I had to get money to pay for this. I had to go to our board members and say, "This is one of the things I want to do in recruitment. I want to have a movie. We cannot vacate the college premises and go out to public schools and private schools all of the time. So I have to have a vehicle that we can send with our alums going, and so forth." So we got funds to do it.

Riess: Were they amazed at the idea?

Cunningham: No, they just thought it was a good idea if I could develop it, and pick the students to be [in it], and get a director. So that was the first kind of thing that I did that was probably different, to develop this movie, and interestingly enough it won a national award from the American College of Public Relations for the work it did and for the fact that it was very well done, because it was professionally directed and filmed.

I marvel now when I think of what we did. We had practically no rehearsal; it had to be a one-shot kind of thing. Naturally, the students had their scripts and had to have a verbal rehearsal of their lines and so forth, and they had to be told what to wear--it was done before we were coed--what would be suitable, and we chose the place. But Sister Mary Dominica and the then dean of students, Sister Helen Benedict, and I worked together on planning the areas where we would set the various scenes. Sister Dominica was very creative in telling this story about the college.

We also had to have a suitable musical background, and we had to have a professional movie company tape it in San Francisco, which we did.

Riess: You loved it!

Cunningham: [laughter] I did because I love the theater. I love anything connected with it. That is really my hidden love, drama and all that sort of thing.

Riess: Do you still have a print around?

Cunningham: Yes, we have. Of course, now it's stylized. If you would like to see it some time, I will get it for you to see.

We had several prints made and we sent it all over the country to different places. We would have our alums show it. I myself took it to the Islands and showed it out in Hawaii in several places. Now we use slides and we have cassettes that are taken all over the country. You can't make a movie all of the time, that is pretty expensive, and so the slide shows are what our recruiters take out on the road today. But it is the same idea.

The movie was a delightful experience and when I think that we did it all in one week--I mean the actual filming was done in a week! I can't believe it now when I realize what the movie

Cunningham: industry does. But we were on our own and we couldn't just be so open about the time. We would have been taking the time of the movie company and that would have been far beyond our means.

We got some money for the film from Coca-Cola: one of our board members, Mr. Charles Maestri, got us Coca-Cola because we had a student going over and taking a bottle of Coke out of a machine--we had to do it kind of subtly. There was another board member who had to do with a dairy here on the peninsula, so he gave money from his company and then when we had a little refreshment scene up on the deck, we had some of the little bottles of milk. We also received money from our cap and gown company. That was the kind of advertising that was given, and helped us. So we put all of those funds together as sponsors. But it was not blatant advertising the way you see it now.

Riess: How about cigarettes?

Cunningham: No, I never thought about it at the time, to get a cigarette company in to do it, no, we did not have any cigarette advertising, but you would see girls smoking or some reference to it because there was a smoking room and areas where they were supposed to smoke. Of course, when I was here in school, you didn't even mention cigarettes!

Riess: I do think of the fifties as the smoking years. Cigarette companies distributing little packs to the campuses, etc.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, they smoked, that's for sure, but we didn't think of getting money from the cigarette companies for our movie advertising.

Riess: So brochures, bulletins, films, scholarship offerings--

Cunningham: I myself went out. I did a lot of personal recruiting myself, which the president today doesn't do--and in my later years as president, of course, I didn't do at all. I enjoyed it though. I loved to talk to the juniors and seniors in different high schools and show them the movie or whatever. But then as there was more work on campus I couldn't possibly keep on traveling and keep up my work in other areas of development, so that, then, had to be given over completely to the recruitment office itself, admissions and recruitment.

Riess: You talk about the competition. What was your competition?

Cunningham: Other colleges in the area that had been four-year colleges long before we did. I think I have mentioned Dominican in San Rafael.

Riess: The College of Holy Names?

Cunningham: And Lone Mountain College, or San Francisco College for Women, as it was originally called. Those colleges in the area would naturally be competitors even though their administrators had been very helpful, particularly those of the College of the Holy Names, in getting us started on the four-year program. But the pattern of women's colleges only, or single sex, was just beginning to change then, and many of the colleges and universities that were single sex say for men were beginning to go coed. You mentioned Santa Clara, and then later the University of San Francisco and then much later than that, St. Mary's. Of course, those were going to be competition. They weren't initially, because they took care of the boys and we took care of the girls, so to speak. The competition was really with the other colleges that were single sex.

We were the first really to go [coed], and we did it before we had to, but we could see that there was a need. There was no longer any reason why we had to remain a college just for women, and it wasn't just because of the competition. We were doing so many things that were bringing male students to the campus, who wanted to come here for one course or another. We had men on a small scale, and we realized many similar colleges, in the East particularly--the idea hadn't moved out to the West so much yet--had gone coed, meaning gone from the female to the male. So I thought, let's analyze and see how it has affected them, if this is something that we want to keep, or do we want to change. Now, this was going to take some time. It took us several years. Now, maybe you don't want to go ahead on that.

Riess: I would like to wait on that. What were you offering in your recruitment message that was different from the College of Holy Names or Lone Mountain or Dominican or whatever?

Cunningham: Of course, I don't know how their recruitment program went. We would indicate that we were the earliest chartered college for women in California, although we had not gone initially into the four-year program, so that we had a history of a long academic background in California; that we were on a comparatively new campus, which, of course, we were; that we were in the San Francisco area, mid-peninsula--we used our location as being one that was advantageous, both within the ability of commuting from the south of us and north of us--and of course, we spoke of the beautiful campus here. We stressed the fact that we had received full accreditation; that we granted credentials, elementary and secondary in the teacher education program. There was a stress on the fine program that we had. Now, that doesn't

Cunningham: mean the other colleges didn't have [it]. I am sure many of the points we emphasized would have been somewhat the same, but it was just the attractiveness of what people found when they came to this campus to visit it and see it, and us.

Riess: How about your record of successful alumnae?

Cunningham: Of course, that would have been a small group in the beginning, and that's true, that we did not have the history of a long line of many alums except the Belmont high school graduates, as I explained earlier. So it was a beginning group that we would have to show.

Riess: How about the number of books in your library?

Cunningham: We had then, of course, a new library. We had new buildings but I don't think you usually attract students just by new buildings. There has to be something more than that. Of course, they would have to know that the accreditation committee approves the library holdings and makes suggestions for whatever increase there should have been and so forth. Then the faculty-student ratio was a very important one that was, I know, stressed, at the time.

Riess: One to nine?

Cunningham: Yes, from the very beginning. Now, it is more than that, but that was important. We were small. We talked about the fact that we were small, but that there were many special opportunities. For certain types of students there were many advantages; this is what they needed, and we were here if they wanted us. We weren't saying, "Don't go to any place else." We were saying, "Here we are and we have these specialties, we are doing these things. We are new. You don't know us." As we recruited, we would try to take CND students back with us. That is still a current way of recruiting, because then they can talk to the students at their high schools who would say, "Now, what is it really like at CND?"

We did all of that sort of thing. I don't think we did it as against any other college, because we were different. One was in the East Bay and we are in the mid-peninsula. One was up in Marin. So it's true that they were competitors in actual fact because they have a history of being a four-year [school] longer than we, and there are many who would go because their parents had gone and so forth. So we had to deal with the clientele who wanted this particular area for whatever reason. We were also very near the San Francisco airport.

Riess: Were your standards for admission the same?

Cunningham: Mostly, I would presume. You have to keep up your academic achievements of the students. It's true, we probably in the beginning maybe allowed more for those who were slower because we could give more time. Now our GPA [grade point average] requirements and all that are much higher. When you are smaller you can have almost a one-to-one basis for help, and also have coaching sessions.

Funding for Independent Colleges

Riess: Back to money. Your membership in the College Independent Foundation--

Cunningham: Independent Colleges (ICNC); Independent Colleges of Northern California.

Riess: Originally, it called itself the College Independent Foundation, Incorporated.

Cunningham: Yes, and then they changed it in the next year, I think.

Riess: I would like to hear how that works. They get a large sum of money and disperse it among their members?

Cunningham: Yes, that's right.

Riess: Per capita?

Cunningham: It is per capita, and also an x-percentage of the total amount; it was 60% across the board, and 40% per capita. It isn't just Catholic colleges, but independent colleges in northern California, and there is a similar group in southern California, Independent Colleges of Southern California. This again is a national trend. About every state has an organization similar to this. We joined ICNC in its first year of organization. Again, that was before I came to CND, but then we have been in it from the very beginning. The college is still in it.

The members of the colleges in one way or another have to participate in helping to encourage gifts from business and industry. It's going out really into the business world, and knowing that they are interested in good membership in their staff at whatever level, and that the independent colleges are an important part of education in the United States. We have

Cunningham: to have both public and private education, and business gets its workers and helpers from both groups. Yet the public sector receives public aid and we have to "go it on our own."

Riess: This is the pep talk now, right?

Cunningham: [laughs] Right!

Riess: But what if you have a contact in one of those businesses that you can solicit yourself?

Cunningham: Well, we tried to remember that the institution that belongs to ICNC has many constituencies, some of whom may have connections in business and industry. So we would say to them, "Do not not give to the college of your choice, but maybe include something in addition"--if we knew there was a special connection to one in addition to all of the colleges in the area--"so that you then are supporting all in a general way, and one in a special way." And that is still what we hope we can get.

Riess: It doesn't mean a lot of conflict in that?

Cunningham: No, it sounds as though it could. Some institutions chose not to join ICNC. For example, Stanford, although it appeals to its alumni very much, has never gone into it. It has remained aloof from it, and above the necessity of joining with smaller institutions. So these colleges and universities have their right of belonging or not belonging. There is a board of directors chosen from business and industry, and members of our board will go out to solicit funds. I have gone out on call to institutions, to banks and so forth. Sister Veronica Skillin does the same thing now. So it is a matter of encouraging business and industry in the area who know nationally that they must give to education, to include us, or in their contributions not to exclude any institution for which they have a special interest.

And we get five figures per college per year [from ICNC], which is always of some help. It hasn't paid any of our big debts, but it has just helped in a small way and it has kept us united.

Riess: Does ICNC function also as a way for this group of independent colleges to be in touch with each other, or do you have other ways?

Cunningham: Oh, there would be other ways, too, of course, because there is the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of California, AICCU, and that's an important way of meeting together with your peers statewide. All independent institutions, whether

Cunningham: they are Catholic, church-related, or secular, have their administrators as a peer group meet on legal matters. AICCU is a legal watchdog, really, in Sacramento for all of the California colleges. For help in finances, the colleges have both a northern and a southern group. Then, each institution has its own alumni. So each group gives another handle, another arm to assist.

Riess: You can't have too many arms!

Cunningham: No, just strong ones.

Riess: I see that each year you would make an appeal for some board members to take over the task of solicitation.

Cunningham: Do you mean in the independent colleges?

Riess: Yes, you would get somebody to be your substitute.

Cunningham: Yes, Mr. Mallen had done it, for example, and Mr. Keil went with me sometimes. It was to get somebody to go with me--or now as they do, the executive director or one of the businessmen have a college person, no matter what college he or she belonged to, go as a support. Business and education were working together. "Now, don't you, as another business, want to help us to keep alive the public-private sector in higher education?"

Riess: Did you like all of that going out there?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, I enjoyed that.

Riess: Pressing the flesh, as the expression goes?

Cunningham: It was a necessity, and since I liked people, it wasn't too hard. I never liked to be turned down! Of course, I had a few turn-downs, but I guess nobody was going to have a record of having not been turned down one or more times.

Riess: You said that one of the amusing things, amusing in a nice way, is the periodic visits to CND from the outside world and the amazement at how the campus really is alive. Did you also experience regular surprise on the part of the outside world about you as the president being a very nifty lady who knew how money works and is a surprising person?

Cunningham: I guess for some of them, if they hadn't met anybody just like me in my role before or my particular own personality, it was a surprise, but I have always gotten along well with people.

Riess: You didn't get a lot of people saying, "I never expected--"

Cunningham: Oh, indeed, indeed, yes, I did, and traveling around a lot. I have had to travel a lot by myself going East, and to different places up and down the coast and just talking with people, but I always enjoyed it, even when I was in the traditional habit, which might have seemed a barrier. I think I did it more as a challenge to myself to let people see that maybe what they had as a preconceived idea of a sister would be wrong, even though they might have been timorous in talking to somebody who had the kind of garb I used to wear, or we used to wear. For the most part, if that were the case and we had a chance to chat, they would come to the "person" beneath the external. It was a surprise for them. I never minded doing it, I enjoyed it. Once in awhile you meet with somebody who seems very stony, but for the most part I did not have that experience.

Riess: We have just sort of rounded the bend into the sixties, and I see that as a nice stopping point.

Cunningham: All right, just let me get my calendar, dear, if I may. Are you doing anything for lunch today?

Riess: I have got two apples in the car. [laughs] Would you like one of them?

Cunningham: Would you like to come over to Tabard with me today and save the apples? How about that?

Riess: I would.

Studying the Feasibility of Becoming Coeducational

[Interview 5: October 21, 1982]##

Riess: Many things happened in the sixties and seventies, and it all started out with a master plan, I take it.

Cunningham: As the college was beginning to show directions toward growth, it was very important that we "plan the plan," as it were, as to how we were going to handle and work with the times, with the educational direction of higher education, with the movements of young people, with all that might affect the students as well as the faculty. There would be need for satisfactory facilities. We had already thought about renovations, and we had some new building plans that had to be considered.

Cunningham: In addition, although we didn't begin this in the early part of the sixties, there had been thought about going coeducational, which in itself would be quite a new direction for the College of Notre Dame.

Riess: You had already had men on the campus. Was the evening school your way of forcing the issue?

Cunningham: No, it wasn't done with that [in mind] at all. There was never any question that we couldn't have men in the student body, but the wave that was showing itself outside was the beginning of that period when the returning student was finding it very important that there be opportunities near their homes where the man or woman who needed more education could continue his or her career and, at the same time, go forth in the late afternoon-evening situation and acquire courses, units, and if necessary a degree in a particular field.

The idea of coeducation was simply a fait accompli as far as the evening division was concerned because, as I think I mentioned once before, there had been coed classes in music, in art, in drama. However, it was merely a little trickle in the day division. When the evening division was started, I think the majority of those who first came were men and then, of course, returning teachers who needed units and courses to make it possible for them to have higher salary ranges because the increments that they would get depended on the number of units that they had acquired since the last settlement of the salary scales. This was customary in the public schools. So teachers in those schools needed education courses and to take care of this need was a part of our evening division program.

No, the question of coeducation per se did not come about as a part of our developing the late afternoon and evening classes. The evening division itself was already there, and was incorporated into the total. That which had already been established naturally gave us a good handle into thinking, "Should we now begin to think about and ultimately plan for the total coeducational program in the college?"

Riess: Where did you begin to think about that?

Cunningham: I think that really began among the members of the general administration, and in the education department, where more men were going into the teaching field. Of course, we had a very good program in teacher education, which of itself was in the day division. To incorporate more men in that department would have been a part of the planning.

Riess: What were the problems then that having men on campus would entail?

Cunningham: That was what we had to find out. The feeling was that we should see what this might mean, and how we were going to do it. So we brought in two experts, each to do an analysis of how this had worked out in other institutions of our type, whether it had been successful, whether it had failed, and from the view of the two people whom we engaged, what their recommendation would be for College of Notre Dame.

Riess: Who were they?

Cunningham: One was the man who was working with us in the development program here at College of Notre Dame, a very strong supporter of the work of planning in the sixties, J. Edgar Sherman, a man from the San Francisco area who worked in college and university development and relations, and also worked for the Independent Colleges of Northern California as their executive director. He knew about the College of Notre Dame as one of the entities in that group. When I asked him if he would consider working for us on a consulting basis and coming on the campus as much as we could afford to have him and he could afford the time, he agreed. We felt that he would be a very good one in this whole, total California West Coast area to study it.

Then we knew about a man who had worked out of the Midwest. He had been recommended to us as a possible person in development, but we already had one in that category. It was suggested that I try to get him and find out if he would pursue for us the problems entailed in transforming a college of a single sex--in our instance, from mostly female--to a coeducational situation, analyzing it from the background of colleges in the Midwest and the East Coast. We would cover a national span by those two investigations. So that's what we did.

Riess: That's a very solid way of going about things. You didn't <u>have</u> to go through all of that.

Cunningham: Oh, no, we just thought it would be a good way of finding out. Otherwise, how can you? You couldn't take just one or two isolated cases. We thought then we would have a case to show our board of governance, the alumnae, and the faculty. It had to be really almost a unanimous decision because of the changes that it would necessitate. There would have to be rather dramatic changes, and we didn't know what they might be, but we would have to have total college support.

Riess: In their investigations, did they look at your campus first?

Cunningham: One of them, of course, knew the campus very well, knew our background, the history and so forth. The other gentleman came out from the Midwest--he was from around the Chicago area--to study this campus, what it was and its history.

Riess: But I was assuming that these men would be doing a lot of one-to-one investigating of how people would feel about it here.

Cunningham: Oh, no, we did that ourselves. That was the on-campus work.

Riess: Having done that in the beginning, you felt that if it had been put to a vote before the study was completed, you would not have had unanimous support for it.

Cunningham: We didn't know. There were people who might feel that it would have been financially impossible for us to do it, or that we might have had to make too many changes in the facilities, or that we didn't have enough facilities in order to implement it right away. We had to see what the picture would be. That is why we had this national survey made by these two individuals, doing it separately. Then we on our part were studying what it would involve from what we could see right here, in the here and now; and then this collaboration of the putting together of the three reports would come back to the administration, to the alumnae in a sense, because we put out feelers all over to our constituencies, and then ultimately, of course, to our regents and to our trustees who formed the governing board.

Riess: Over what period of time was this? When did it begin?

Cunningham: I would say it began in the early sixties, probably '62 and '63. I don't have the files right at my beck and call, but it was within that period because it took certainly about five or six years for us to make the final decision and to make it public.

Riess: You were coeducational by 1967.

Cunningham: Yes, that's right. The seeds were beginning in the early sixties, and the studies were being made, and the committees were meeting and that sort of thing. We were doing it very low keyed to begin with. I mean we didn't put out a national bulletin about this, but we did feel out our alumnae and, of course, it was open with the faculty and with the students, too, in steps and stages.

Riess: In that five-year period, of course, you had going for you the momentum of many changes nationwide.

Cunningham: Yes, yes. Now, we did not do it, as some might assume, because we had to. We planned before there was even a great push, but we knew that colleges had done this. Probably more colleges that were male in their orientation had gone coed than the reverse, but this is what we wanted to see, how it had affected smaller institutions the type of ours.

Riess: There was a positive report about it, I take it?

Cunningham: Interestingly enough, when the final reports came--and they were quite lengthy tomes with all of the data because we were paying good money for these surveys, and the travel and so forth that all of this had involved--one gave us a green light and one put up the red light, and it was up to the college administration, faculty, governing board, for our final decision [on] which way we were going to go. Pretty obviously, we chose the green light!

The gentleman from the East, having gone to many campuses and colleges and universities and probably surveyed others that maybe he didn't visit, felt that it would be too much of a financial burden. It was the beginning of the closing of some of the small colleges, I guess, in that era, and finance had always been a problem. So his recommendation was that if we were satisfied with what we were doing now--I am putting it in very broad terms--that maybe we should keep the way we were as a single-sex college, and just bring in the males when we needed or when they wanted to come to certain courses, but not to make it an overall push because financially, from what other colleges had done, they had gone into a terrific building program maybe to make this effective and so forth.

On the other hand, the "Sherman Report," as I could call it, was the opposite. Of course, that is interesting because this man knew our capabilities both financially and academically, had seen us in operation, reviewed not only those in the immediate Bay Area that had considered going or had already gone coed, and he had the advantage, too, of talking on a one-to-one basis with members of the faculty and administration and the board, which the other man didn't. (He wasn't assigned to do that anyway.) So that, of course, was probably a more valid thing from our point of view that knowing us so well, [he] just didn't say, "Let's go ahead and do it." But he knew what our capabilities were, knew the problems that there would be, and because he worked more closely with us could see how we could do it perhaps less expensively and yet be successful. Maybe colleges that this other gentleman had seen had put much more money into it, and yet did not have the return in students that had been anticipated and, therefore, were not successful.

Riess: When you had taken your tour before you took office here, had you had any thought of that in mind?

Cunningham: No, not at all. I was taking the college as it was right there, not that I didn't see colleges that were coed, but it was primarily colleges that would have been similar to us and there was no thought in my mind then of any radical change, which that would have been--a radical thought--in '56 or '57.

Riess: It was certainly not what you had been put in office to do at that point.

Cunningham: No, that's right.

Riess: How was your network among the Catholic colleges in the United States, or among small women's colleges? What nationwide organizations did you personally belong to so that you might have gotten a lot of this information yourself?

Cunningham: There is, from the point of view of Catholic colleges and universities, the National Catholic Education Association, NCEA, [which] has a nationwide network on the elementary, secondary, and collegiate and university level. So we had belonged to that from the very beginning. In addition to that, there were the organizations of any collegiate or university level--NEA, the National Educational Association that has documents and services that it can give to people.

Riess: I would imagine that a lot of studies of this nature would be put out by those places during that period.

Cunningham: Yes, there were. I am not sure there were studies that I was familiar with, but there were reports now and again. That is how I knew there were many colleges in the East, or a good number considering the total number of institutions of higher learning in the country, that had done this, and it would be well for us to have some contact directly. That was why the second consultant was organized to do that.

Riess: But they weren't working for five years.

Cunningham: Oh, no, no, no. Their report, particularly his, was a year's survey; I mean, we allowed a year for that because we weren't rushing into it. But during that interval, the members of the administration and the college faculty and our own local constituency of the sisters and so forth, were having this under consideration and studying the alumnae as to how we thought we could do it. So there were really three groups at work: the intimate, internal one of the collegiate family and then the two consultants.

The Dormitory Problem, and Foreign Students

Riess: I guess in the very late sixties, more in the seventies, dormitories had become coed. You didn't start out with coed dormitories?

Cunningham: No. There is an interesting little sidelight about that. When we finally made our decision, had voted, and had it approved, one of the things we decided was that the male population that would come here would have to be a commuting population because we did not feel that we could then have a changeover to a dormitory that would be satisfactory for male students. From the financial point of view, we were going to put up apartments and they were going to be for graduate students, but for the present or foreseeable future, it would have to be women only in the undergraduate residence. This was the way we had to make our decision, and that was from a financial point of view--not that we didn't want men in residence, but as I said, you know my policy was not to do anything that we did not have money to do, and not to get some terrific loan situation that we could not take care of immediately.

Interestingly enough, in the recruitment for the first class of the undergraduate division that would have male members--and by that time the apartments were ready so that we could take some of the graduate students out of the two dormitories that were just bulging--in that period, by a fluke, three of the incoming male freshmen residents arrived bag and baggage on registration day for residence. One had come up from the Sacramento-Vacaville area, one from the Fresno valley area, and one had come from the Orient. I can't explain it now, but it hadn't been realized that they were coming in as residents, and so they came with all of their paraphernalia.

We had to make an instant decision whether we were going to send them back and not accept them, or were we going to make an immediate adjustment. The adjustment had to be instantaneous. Fortunately, because the apartments were ready, the ground floor of Julie Billiart Hall was not filled. Because we had been able to move some students over to the apartments, a few of the rooms had been used on the ground floor as offices. So we made an instant decision to take the rooms that would be near one of the bathroom areas and cut off that corridor area from use by the girls. I think the girls on that floor had to use the back stairs!

Cunningham: So we took away the offices and made an instant male residential situation that very day, and we never regretted it! [laughs] (Two of those three first male residents have been very loyal and dedicated alumni all the years up to today; the other one transferred after his sophomore year.) We said, "We can do it, if we are put to."

Riess: That's amusing. How many males came in the first year in 1967?

Cunningham: There was a fairly adequate number, but nothing like we wanted to have or would be able to take care of. There were some from the immediate area, but that number has grown, of course.

Riess: You have had a number of people from the Orient, it seems to me. How has that happened?

Cunningham: We have always had some students from the Philippines, so the secondary schools from which they had come would have had the name of our college as one to transfer [to]. Some of their graduates had come to CND, and, therefore, they could recommend it to others, so there'd be a continuing trickle or a little heavier one from several of the Philippine institutions. When the Hong Kong and Taiwan area opened, and students from there were coming more to the West Coast, it was significant to find a place where it wouldn't be too far for them; it was far enough, several thousand miles across the ocean.

Then the embassies and consulates checked colleges and schools in this area; they had reports of the good record of our college, so they would notify their high schools of the opportunities here. Also, our alumni from the past directed students here, so really we were not unknown. We might have seemed an unknown when they started to come from Singapore and places like that, but again somebody would have heard about the College of Notre Dame, knew it was a location that was easy to reach. It was small, it gave the students a chance to become acclimated not only literally to the climate of California, but the academic climate.

Riess: Did you adapt your curricula in any way for those students?

Cunningham: The adjustments, of course, were that there had to be a counseling program and a coaching for language problems. Now, of course, there is a foreign language test that is given to foreign students.

Riess: Yes, TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language].

Cunningham: In the beginning, we were probably much more elastic in our acceptance than we would be now, and by that same token we had to give some coaching lessons and give the students a little bit more time to learn than we do now. We have become much more sophisticated in the accepting of foreign students, although we do have an ESL [English as a second language] program, which of course probably most of the schools have. That program, as we know it now, the ESL, wasn't in effect in the mid-sixties, although in the seventies it was quite the thing to have. We had to make an opportunity for these students to have individual direction and help, and yet some didn't make it. Many did, of course.

Riess: Were most of them coming from Catholic schools?

Cunningham: A good number, but not all by any matter of means.

Riess: I am talking about the ones in the Orient.

Cunningham: No, the young man--one of our first three of the triumvirate who arrived--was not from a Catholic school. I don't remember how he happened to hear of us. Only one of the three actually was; the one who came from the Fresno area was from the Catholic school there.

Awareness and Cooperation Among Catholic Institutions in the Bay Area

Riess: Did you get together in any regular way with your fellow Bay Area Catholic college presidents, like Sister Mary Ambrose Devereaux at the College of Holy Names and so on and so on?

Cunningham: I mentioned the NCEA, which was the National Catholic Educational Association, and that national organization had area groups and we belonged to the southwest unit of the NCEA. So in addition to meeting nationally, we met annually in either Los Angeles or San Francisco. It alternated between the two. So we were always in contact, one with another of the small institutions. In addition, our colleges belonged to the Independent Colleges of Northern California, the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, and those--ICNC met quarterly and AICCU met biannually, both the north and south. From this educational administrative network we were always exchanging ideas and questions and talking and searching for the answers to problems that might have arisen in other institutions.

Cunningham: Latterly, the presidents of the Catholic colleges in the San Francisco Bay Area have met every month or every six weeks.

Riess: That is quite frequent. What kind of issues are typical?

Cunningham: Anything! The presidents meet at luncheon at one of the institutions and just talk about anything that comes to mind. But it is a way of not having any recorded minutes, of being very open and frank, a sharing kind of thing. I know in my own administration it was very helpful and I know that Sister Veronica finds it interesting and a benefit, too, just a letting-your-hair-down kind of thing.

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Riess: What kind of ripple did the big step toward coeducation send through the Catholic education community?

Cunningham: When Santa Clara went coeducational, we felt we were probably the school that was going to feel the competition more, because of those who might be coming up in this peninsula area from wherever we had recruited, many of them would find it more intriguing and interesting to go to a coed institution, and we thought that Santa Clara would be one of our main competitors, which it proved it actually was. But that didn't deter us or deter anyone else in this area because none of us felt that we couldn't survive and work it all out. I am sure all of us spent considerably more money in our recruiting program; I know we did. That was where we felt we had to put a very big portion of the not-so-big funds that we got, toward an increased and a strengthened recruitment program, and I have never regretted it at all.

Then the other colleges, the University of San Francisco, ultimately went coed, and then Dominican, Holy Names and St. Mary's. Of course, St. Mary's and Holy Names would have had the same kind of concern about who would be drawn to which college as we did relative to Santa Clara. All of us are still alive and working through whatever the problems might be.

Solving Space Problems

Riess: In those years, you were continuing to gain more and more students?

Cunningham: Yes, there wasn't one big massive tidal wave, but in a review of the statistics up through the late sixties, you can see that the program was certainly increasing in numbers to the extent

Cunningham: that from the aspect of residence, whereas we had intended that the apartments would be for graduate students only, we had to make the decision that soon we would have seniors in residence, and very shortly after that, even juniors; in other words, the graduate students then were going to have to take a second place in the residential planning, because they could live off campus more easily than undergraduates. That was how we were able to readjust and take care of the residential numbers that were increasing. With the day students or the commuting students, there were no problems. We had to rearrange classrooms and faculty offices; that sort of thing has always been kind of a headache where somebody had been in an office by herself and now had to share offices because we were adding more faculty which, of course, had to be, as the sections of classes increased with the many more students then.

So ultimately the apartments became simply for undergraduates. Only if we had a space, which we don't have, might a graduate student or married couple have a residential apartment on campus.

Riess: The plan, as I wrote it down at one point in reviewing the notes for the fifties, was to have six hundred students by 1970, and another of your goals was the one-to-ten ratio of faculty to students.

Cunningham: I should refer to our statistics for the specific year, but the faculty-student ratio was much higher than that, I think; even from the point of view of economy, it has doubled, where now we hope to have a one-to-twenty faculty-student ratio. The six hundred, that would have included two hundred residential undergraduates, and a hundred residential graduates. That percentage was changed to the total undergraduate residential of three hundred, which it has remained. The numbers of day division, commuting division, have increased so much so that our Futures Committee, which was our planning committee in the seventies, had to reinforce and study what we had done in the sixties; that committee decided that fifteen hundred would be a more likely and suitable goal. That would not make it impossible for us financially to take care of that number. That is another problem in the seventies though.

Riess: What would make this whole thing sink or swim financially is whether you would be able to find additional sisters to teach and to be able to keep that ratio up without investing more in faculty salaries.

Cunningham: Interestingly enough, in the sixties concurrently with the increase in students, there was a decrease in the number of sisters. It was a small decrease in the beginning, but that was the period when, from the point of view of the Church and the post-Vatican II concerns, religious life itself was undergoing changes which, of course, would affect Notre Dame. Therefore, where we had the fairly large amount of funds coming in from the allocation of the sisters' salaries to the college, the numbers of sisters that were decreasing then meant there were additional funds needed from elsewhere. So it was a problem. We were getting many more students as we were losing the living endowment. Therefore, [being] pressed for funds was something else that was falling on our shoulders.

Riess: Yes, exactly. So the way to deal with that was to increase the ratio for one thing, and the funds.

Cunningham: Yes, to go out in a more frank and open way with our alums, to talk to the parents, to get our boards much more involved in our fund raising. We mentioned the facilities that had to be increased in the early sixties. Notre Dame Memorial Chapel was built and completed in '61. That opened up the opportunity for more space here in Ralston Hall. It made the social facilities and cultural facilities better, because we then had a building [Ralston Hall] that had not been available for that use until we were able to build a beautiful new chapel, and that was completely paid for by gifts to us individually.

Riess: Do you mean religious services were held in this building?

Cunningham: Yes, the ballroom, up to '61, was the chapel.

Riess: I hadn't realized that. I thought maybe the little place down at the corner--

Cunningham: No, that was a temporary parish church.

Riess: That was given to you.

Cunningham: Interestingly enough, we gave the land to the San Francisco Archdiocese in the fifties so that the parish could have a little church in Belmont. As Belmont grew, so did the need for a bigger church so that when the parish was able to put up a bigger church, school, and social hall up on the Alameda de las Pulgas, then the archdiocese returned to us the land and the small building at the entrance to the college campus, with only one prohibition, a request, that we not use this as a church or chapel again. So we then turned that into a much-needed art studio, even though it was far removed from some of the classrooms that we used for art. That was how we acquired that building.

Riess: Yes, I had gotten inklings of that in the report. I had not understood how it had worked. Please describe how you used the ballroom as a chapel then?

Cunningham: From the very beginning, when the college moved here in 1922 and began renovating it, the sisters looked, of course, for the main room they needed, a chapel for the community of sisters. In leaving San Jose they had left a very beautiful and ornate kind of building that was the Notre Dame chapel there. So when they saw the availability of a very, very large room, the one that was, of course, suitable was the ballroom. The only problem was the fact that it had fourteen mirrors from floor to ceiling! [laughter]

Well, they weren't at a loss to know what to do. They had those mirrors covered with a light brown wallpaper. Fortunately, it did not hurt the mirrors, as we saw later on. So everything then, even the altar from old San Jose, was moved to the Belmont ballroom chapel. The benches from the San Jose chapel were used. From 1922 until 1961 all religious services for the college, the high school, and the community were in the ballroom. Even the annex where the business office is now was used; there were benches out there for the overflow.

Everybody gathered for Masses and religious services in the ballroom chapel. Later on, there was a small domestic chapel in the high school, though that was just for the resident students there. There is no longer a chapel in that building for the students, as a separate one was built near the convent.

When we enlarged the college dining room in 1958, and when we built St. Joseph Hall, then the students left Ralston Hall as their residence. These second and third floor rooms had been the students bedrooms. The girls loved living in here, and they hated to leave. That was the amazing thing, and I kept on saying to them, "But you are going into a brand new building!" It was the seniors who hated to leave more than anyone. "You are going into a brand new building. You will have a basin in each room. You will have a dresser and everything." But it didn't make any difference. They <u>hated</u> to leave, but that was just too bad, they had to leave Ralston and go up the hill.

Then we had these rooms made available for some offices, not for many, in the beginning, mostly for visitors, for the sisters' community then that was moved in here, and they had a little more room than they had before. The young sisters who came here to study in the college could now live here, which they hadn't been able to do before. Later, the building and opening of Notre Dame Memorial Chapel, and the reassessing of our situation here in

Cunningham: Ralston Hall made much more room for us available without having to spend that much more money in putting up any more buildings. It was simply a renovation project here, renovation and restoration, which we are still, as you know, in the process of doing.

Riess: That is another testimonial to how you managed to do it all and not go into debt. But you still had to raise money.

Cunningham: Yes, absolutely.

Riess: You can't juggle it forever!

Cunningham: No, no. Of course, we had to keep raising tuition. When you look at it now, you would say, "How did we ever manage?" We managed really because all of the salaries to the sisters were given into the college, and that was a considerable portion of the money we used per year. That fund wasn't an invested endowment, it was the living and usable endowment every year. If we hadn't had that, we couldn't have managed really, because even though business and industry were beginning to support private colleges, it was only a beginning. So not only were we and smaller colleges beginning to press outward for funds from constituents that had nothing specifically to do with the college, but those firms and companies were getting requests from all over. From the point of view of government, if business firms want to get their taxes lowered, one of the ways to do so is by contributing to nonprofit institutions.

Riess: Is the living endowment just handled on paper, or is there some actual sum of money?

Cunningham: The amount of money that each sister gains in salary is what a lay person would get for the same position, or the approximate amount. That money goes from the college treasurer to the community treasurer, to the sister who is holding the job of treasurer for the community. Then a deduction is made for the living expenses of the sisters, which would be a minimal amount, and then the balance is returned in a check to the college. It is an actual transfer.

Riess: It is a real transaction.

Cunningham: It is not just something that you talk about that isn't there; it is a real transaction, all verified by CPAs and government and everything else. The sisters sign contracts with the college for the amount of money that we are entitled to by virtue of our rank in the faculty, our educational background, whether we are full time or part time in administration or on the faculty.

Handling Rank and Tenure Decisions

Riess: I am curious about what kind of pressures there are on the faculty to advance in rank and tenure and income.

Cunningham: That is where the religious congregations, and in a specific way our own congregation here, had to have religious faculty members who could serve in the same academic situation that a lay confrere would serve. The sisters have to have the same credentials and degrees, the doctorates or masters. The rules for position in the various degrees, whether you are a professor, an associate professor or assistant, and down through--all of the ranks are exactly the same for the sisters as for lay faculty. If the sisters do not progress academically, they do not get promoted to the next rank, whatever it would be. Placement in rank depends on one's academic progress. An assistant professor, which is the rank where there is no doctorate required, gets the salary that would be commensurate not with years in teaching, but with their rank, and the rank depended on where they were in the salary step. It is all interwoven; there is no difference in the status of the religious and they do not get promoted if they don't get the points that have to be made for any faculty member.

If we were a research institution or a university, there would be more emphasis, both for the lay faculty as well as the religious faculty, on publishing. We place a much higher emphasis on good teaching. Not that there hasn't to be some publishing, whether it is major publishing or smaller; there should be some of that. But there isn't the heavy emphasis that you would find at some of the larger institutions where you have to have a book coming off of the press. We have some faculty who do some marvelous work in publishing, because that is their interest as well as their teaching, but you can't expect everybody to do that.

We had to make a decision. Did we want to be just like the larger institutions, that if there was specifically not a new book off the press, they didn't get promoted? We had to say, "No, you can't do it that way." There are many more ways of contributing to our type of college than just by publishing.

Riess: The reason it came to mind was that in your annual report you would often mention publications. That is a point of pride always of an institution.

Cunningham: It is there, but it is not the magic number one priority. There has to be very good teaching.

Riess: How is good teaching assessed?

Cunningham: An evaluation is made by the academic vice president, formerly the academic dean; by the reports of the students--evaluations, surveys, that are handed out in every class every semester, and those are on record. The chairman of the department has to review and evaluate the work of the faculty members and has to give sufficient warning and time if he or she sees that a faculty member is a little slow in doing something. So you have a triple evaluation really: the academic vice president (the dean), the chairman of the department, and the students.

The Board of Regents

Riess: In 1962, the board of regents was established. This began significant growth in new funding. Do you want to talk about that board of regents?

Cunningham: We have talked about what planning we did in the sixties, and that was certainly a key part of our planning. We had, from the point of view of governance in the institution and ownership, of course, the trustees who were sisters of Notre Dame. We had the advisory board which had been inaugurated with the establishment of the college as a four-year college.

In my reviewing what other institutions did, not only in my 1957 internship, but in my continuing studying of institutions comparable to ours, my reading reports of different colleges and universities, talking with my peers here and there, and at different meetings, governance was a very important thing. I realized that we had to have a group that was stronger in a financial way than the group that we had, that we would have to go out and make further inroads on the community at large, the lay community at large, if we wanted to continue to grow and develop.

The term that was used more than the term "advisory board," which some, of course, did have, as the one chosen initially, I realized was that of "board of regents." Now, even up to today, the term has different meanings. We know that in the University of California system the board of regents are the top, top. But we had trustees, so therefore there was no question at that time of making everybody who associated with us a trustee; so my choice then was, since we had trustees officially, the term obviously would be regents. Those two combined in working together to form what developed in the earlier stages and has continued to develop to be our governing board, our Governance Board.

Cunningham: The trustees have remained the legal and corporate owners of the College of Notre Dame, but in consulting with people in various institutions that I thought would understand what I was talking about, and consulting with the regents themselves, I received a very positive encouragement and it was felt that we were doing a service to the college to have a constantly progressive and enlarged board of regents who would meet quarterly rather than just the annual meeting the advisory board had been accustomed to having.

The trustees, who officially and legally had to meet annually, would be able to be of far better service if instead of simply meeting by themselves, which we did for awhile, and then receiving from me a report of what the regents suggested and did and so forth, it would be far better if they came and there could be a joint exchange. Those two groups then would really be the governing board, and only when, by law, we had to have those who would be legally owners alone make a decision by vote, would the trustees meet separately. Those instances were determined to be to assume a large debt, or to sell a large piece of property, and to elect the president. The trustees were those solely responsible by law for those movements and decisions.

Riess: So then did it come about that they attended all four of the meetings?

Cunningham: Yes, the records then show that trustees and regents met together and, therefore, the trustees would hear all of the regents speaking out and making their decisions. It has been very rare that the trustees have had to meet alone. For example, in the building of St. Joseph Hall, and again when we added the apartments, that was a decision that was made talking with the entire governing board, but the ultimate vote to assume an additional loan from the government had to be taken by the trustees alone. So another bond was floated at that time. (I guess 1965 to 1967 would have been the years when we began on the apartments.) There were periods then when the trustees, the sisters alone, had to meet to make the official, legal decisions. But they knew from meetings, and discussing it with the regents, what their advice would be.

Riess: They were certainly not thinking alone at that point.

Cunningham: No, no.

Riess: That is the $600,000 loan?

Cunningham: That's right, added to that which had already been taken out for the 1958 building and [it was] a government loan there. They just floated another bond and combined the two. One was two and

Cunningham: seven-eights interest and the other is three and a quarter, I think. The financiers and the government had to work that out. It was over a million dollars, but now it is down to $600,000 or something like that, which we are not allowed to pay all at once even if we could! Happily, the government won't let us.

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Riess: You were known for a philosophy of not undertaking something you couldn't pay for.

Cunningham: I was brought up to pay as you go, except for the government, without which we couldn't have done it. Many people could have put up buildings, if they had the ready money. We did not have it, so by government loan was our way. For the furnishings of St. Joseph Hall, for example, which did not come under the government loan, we had to raise money. That was through our alumni, and through gifts that would come in from other donors specifically for that purpose.

When we went into building the chapel, that came about primarily through the bequest to me from William H. McCarthy, my uncle, who had been a board member and great help to the sisters for many years. Over and above that, the alumni then were to help us, and any other funds that I could glean and gather went for that chapel. As I think of it now, it was remarkable that we were able to put up that building for $290,000. We had $300,000, so we had $10,000 left over to begin a chapel endowment.

For the apartments, the bond financing was reorganized, to take care of both debts. Again, the furnishings had to be provided for; funds had to be gathered for a couple of years for the furnishings for the apartments, because the government was helping us put them up, but that did not include furnishings.

The next point of the problem, and it goes into the early seventies, of course, was when we realized that we had to enlarge the library and do something about that. Maybe you want me to wait on that until we get into it a bit later.

Riess: I like the idea that we are able to limit ourselves to decade by decade.

Cunningham: So we can talk about it and refer back to this at that time.

Riess: The first so-called board of regents appears listed in the 1964-1966 catalog, with Edward Keil as the chairman.

Cunningham: Yes, he had been on the early advisory board, so he had had a background about CND. He had the legal strength of having served us through the bonds that we needed to get for our early government building program. So he had a good foot on the campus and he was willing to take the chairmanship. We knew that we had to get more of the same kind of service from a legal standpoint.

Riess: Let me just skim down these names. I think they are one of the things that is interesting in this interview from a broad historical point of view. [refers to list] Dr. Robert Ackerman.

Cunningham: It had been suggested, and we had had on the advisory board, eminent people in education who would understand us. On the Stanford faculty in English was a Dr. Robert Ackerman who would have been recommended to us as one who would very likely be interested in our college and, therefore, let's find out whether this member from a very outstanding university would be willing to serve as a regent of this particular college in the area.

Riess: So that was prestige rather than financial.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, that's right. That was from the academic point of view, yes, the academic gifts that he could give to us.

Riess: Ruth Adams was from the alumnae.

Cunningham: And she had also been on the early board. She was an outstanding educator, and outstanding alum, and so we felt that that was important to have her.

Riess: Hart Clinton?

Cunningham: Mr. Clinton was the publisher and editor of the San Mateo Times. He was an attorney and had had a connection with my own family and, therefore, had a personal interest. He had a sister who was a sister of Notre Dame, though she was back in the Connecticut province. He would have, if he wanted to take on the job, a very viable reason for serving as one of our regents, which he did.

Riess: Did he act as a publicist in any way? Did you get more editorial space?

Cunningham: [laughs] No, not necessarily more editorials, but we got good service through his interest and, of course, the fact that we are the only four-year college in San Mateo County and his is the principal paper in this area would have made it a justifiable reason also.

Riess: Robert Coyle?

Cunningham: Remembering that we had come from San Jose, Mr. Coyle is an outstanding businessman in the San Jose area. Coyle Chevrolet was the company of which he was the executive officer. Interestingly enough, he also has a daughter who is a young sister of Notre Dame. So he had a dual reason, and he would be there as a helper in finance and a helper in business and a supporter, as one who knew the order and would certainly serve us well with his advice.

Riess: Dr. Harold Harper?

Cunningham: As we had chosen somebody in the educational field from the Stanford area, so we looked to San Francisco, and Dr. Harold Harper was dean of the graduate division of the University of California in San Francisco. He was an outstanding Catholic gentleman. His mother had gone to Notre Dame in San Francisco, so he knew Notre Dame for many years. He was an extremely intellectual and intelligent and a wonderful administrator and figure in the Catholic educational field as well as in the public arena. So we asked him to serve and he is serving still.

Riess: Did you always look for Catholics?

Cunningham: No, no. If you go down the list, Ackerman was not a Catholic. Of course, to begin with Catholics would have had more of an interest, but read some of the other names.

Riess: Raphael Igoa.

Cunningham: We had people who came to the college from the wide national field, we had them from the Orient, and Mr. Igoa was from the Philippines. He had daughters in Notre Dame and his daughters had all been educated by the sisters. In fact, a couple of them were young sisters at the time. He was a vice president of Philippine Airlines. So he had an international connection, and he had a Notre Dame connection also, and he was not an American in that sense.

Riess: Interesting. Mrs. Marshall Madison.

Cunningham: A great, great lady of the San Francisco society. She and her husband were very outstanding benefactors to many causes in San Francisco. She herself was a Catholic by birth. Her husband was a convert. She was recommended to me, and I was able to get her for our board. She was so busy with many things. It would be a wonderful thing to have Mrs. Madison because she was almost like a "Mrs. San Francisco" in her day. I can still see

Cunningham: her sitting in St. Joseph Hall with me with the young lady who was then director of development. We were talking about the potential of the college and what we were doing and we really wanted her to serve, and so forth. She graciously accepted and has been a wonderful support for many, many years--not only financially but personally, even to this day. We are very, very close friends.

Riess: Yes, I have heard such nice things about her. I have never met her. Elena Madison.

Cunningham: Elena Madison, yes, and her husband was a very prominent attorney. One must look for funds, for family, Notre Dame family people in that sense, for those who understand something about our type of education. So that was why we were feeling out, but we didn't want all of one kind. We wanted people with broad connections, too, which Mrs. Madison and Mr. Madison had.

Riess: You already had Mr. Mallen.

Cunningham: Yes, he had been on from the very beginning, so he continued in that role. We did not bring in all of the advisory board members. We had to make choices and it had been recommended that he be asked to continue on to serve the college, not only as an advisor but now as a regent.

Riess: Dr. Fenton McKenna?

Cunningham: Again, someone in the public schools, the higher educational arena, who might be interested in serving us, the famous Dr. Fenton McKenna. He, too, was a Catholic, He was the director of creative arts--and founded the creative arts division--of San Francisco State College, later San Francisco State University. He was charming and delightful and a wonderful man. So we had somebody from the university system, we had somebody from Stanford, we had someone from the state college system from the point of view of education who could give us a lot of input or lead us to others who could help us as we were developing.

Riess: How about from Berkeley?

Cunningham: No, Dr. Harper would have represented the university in the San Francisco area.

Riess: Mr. William Roberts?

Cunningham: Mr. William Roberts was the president of Ampex. We looked for someone in the peninsula area who was high up in the business world and it was Mr. Mallen, I think, who had suggested Bill

Cunningham: Roberts. So we touched him and asked if he would serve as a board member, which he graciously did. Mr. Roberts was not a Catholic.

Riess: Is this what is now referred to as Silicon Valley?

Cunningham: Yes, but I don't think it was called that back in those days. It probably became that much later, but that's exactly what we wanted. We were trying to tap a green light connecting us with a good number of these people.

Riess: Was he able to bring some of his technology?

Cunningham: Not really. I think Ampex gave us some things, but it gave us connections, and it gave us the prestige of his name in the beginning, to have a man of his stature at Ampex.

Riess: Mr. Harry Ross?

Cunningham: Harry Ross was the controller of the city and county of San Francisco. He had been nominated by Mr. Keil, who knew him quite well. Mr. Harry Ross was a Jewish gentleman, and you asked if we were tapping all Catholics--we weren't. We were trying to make our board as broad as possible, but you know that perhaps your own people would have more of an interest.

We wanted someone who would have a top analytical mind in finance, and Harry Ross was suggested as one who certainly was and, of course, from the city and county of San Francisco's point of view he did. Mr. Keil knew him, went to see him and Harry accepted a place on the board. I think now, in those early days, one of the first things he suggested--we didn't take him up soon enough--was to get computers. That was very new then for us. He was insisting all along that we do something with computers right away, but we dragged our feet a little bit, I guess, because we knew it was going to be a kind of financial burden to get into. But he was one who started us out on the road there.

Riess: Speaking of a loyal Jewish gentleman, I think of Ben Swig at the University of Santa Clara, who really adopted that college.

Cunningham: Yes, he contributed a great deal, he did a marvelous job for them. But he was already "taken," shall we say. [laughs]

Riess: It is an interesting relationship.

Cunningham: The Jewish people of San Francisco have had a very strong interest in higher education, not only the secular of Stanford and Cal that they supported, but private higher education, too.

Riess: Dr. F. W. Strothman?

Cunningham: Dr. Strothman was also from Stanford University. He was a linguist. Dr. Ackerman was in English, and Dr. Strothman was a linguist. He again was not a Catholic, but because he had been recommended, we tapped Dr. Strothman to serve. That was again from the point of view that while Stanford was way out of our league financially and academically, yet the people who served as faculty members there certainly would have an interest in an institution such as ours because Stanford began small, too. He was a very fine help to us from the point of view of the academic program of the college.

Riess: Was this board solid for some years, with good attendance?

Cunningham: They would attend fairly regularly. As I remember in the earlier days, I had to vary the dates of meetings. Now we have a set date so that people can know a year ahead of time the meetings. There are always problems to get a one hundred percent attendance at any board meeting, and I am not sure we always obtained that, but we had subcommittees of the board and, therefore, the people in our college who needed to talk to them were always able to get to them. Ruth Adams served from the point of view of the academics from this college, too. So she, Dr. Ackerman, Dr. Strothman, and Dr. Harper, from the point of view of the academic as well as the influence of the university system and what was going along those lines, would meet from the point of view of the academic committee work.

The other one that I remember that didn't come as often probably was Mr. Roberts. He probably had to go all over the world for Ampex. The higher up person that you get in one sense, the more difficult it is. Now we have such an outstanding board chairman, George Keller, the chairman of Standard Oil, and it's on his calendar a year in advance for meetings here at the college.

Riess: I noticed from my readings that in the case of Notre Dame and Webster, which I don't know--

Cunningham: Webster College.

Riess: "In 1967, the order"--this is the quote that I have--"the order surrendered control to a board of trustees whose majority was lay." You were not surrendering control.

Cunningham: Oh, no, no. That story is a very different story from ours. Can you turn it off the record just a minute? [tape interruption]

Cunningham: The Sisters of Loreto have a college, Webster College, whose president, Sister Jacqueline [Jacqueline Grennan Wexler], handled the changes in Catholic higher education and ultimately some changes in religious life quite differently from what we felt would be good for the College of Notre Dame. They did turn over, as I understand it, the running of their institution to a completely lay board or majority lay board.

Riess: Was this a case where the sisters themselves became a secular order?

Cunningham: No, I don't think that happened. As it ultimately happened, Sister Jacqueline did leave the congregation and became the president of Hunter College in New York. Other individuals may have also left the congregation, as have some of our own, and become secular, but that is beside the point. No, they could do that individually, but the college did go into a rather far left position, shall we say, as to how to engage the work of the laity in the role of higher education without taking away from the congregation that had given birth to the institution and still have the ownership of it.

Riess: Did it work?

Cunningham: I think the college as far as I know is there, but it isn't a college such as the College of Notre Dame would be today.

Riess: So it was in no way a model for other institutions.

Cunningham: No. I am sure there were others that probably did the same. It created a bit of a stir in the way that the new things in education and religious life in the Church were being handled.

Riess: I wondered whether your accreditation rating improved with this board structure change? Had it been recommended?

Cunningham: No, it had not been recommended. As far as I remember, the earlier accreditation report reviewed our structures, as they had access to all of the reports of meetings of the trustees or regents. These reports were always available to the committee and when the chairman of the accrediting committee would come in advance to talk to us, we would explain the organizational chart. I would be subjected to questions, such as who these people were, and so forth.

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Cunningham: Ten years ago, the accrediting committee suggested that it would be a very good idea if board members could be interviewed, and not only did they interview our board, the first time up in their

Cunningham: offices in the city, or wherever they wanted to see them, but just recently, just in the fall of 1980, most of the governing board members came to campus and had a meeting with the team, and that was a unique experience. So everything that we have done has been open to the accrediting committee.

Did you read the report of the accrediting committee, the last one?

Riess: Yes.

Cunningham: The chairman there was very interested, I would say impressed, with how the governing board of the college had worked, because it had the two branches, the trustees and regents. I know that I was put to a great deal of questioning by him individually, and by other members of the accrediting commission, as to how we happened to do this, how I thought of it, who suggested it. I said, "Nobody suggested it. I just thought it up myself really, and talked about it as being a very viable way of handling this, and we have found that it has worked." If you read the report, he commented on that, I think, and said that the idea was different, and he didn't understand it all, yet their team thought it worked very well! [laughter]

They talked to the lay members without my being present. The sisters were not present either when the accrediting committee came in and talked. We wanted the team to be utterly free to have any of the trustees present, that they talk directly to them. So they had full access to all of our lay wisdom on the board.

Money and Grants

Riess: Then what kind of new outside money started to come in? I see, for instance--odds and ends--the Jockey Club, a thousand dollars; Mrs. Marshall Madison, the Marshall Madison Fund. This is not big money.

Cunningham: It began small, and then my work in the business of the development office that I had set up was to go out to foundations. That was one of the big things that I had to do, to go out and not only get from individuals the thousand dollar gifts, but the tens of thousands and if possible a hundred thousand dollars and to study the background of the foundations that would be interested in our type of work; whether they would give to us was another question, but you don't go to the company that gives only to hospitals when you are an educational institution.

Cunningham: I was very, very personally involved in the financial material that had to be obtained for the college. As I had mentioned earlier, I was, of course, interested vitally in the academic, but I left that to the academic specialists, and took upon myself the role of prime fund raiser. Where I had done recruiting before, I couldn't do that directly any more, but I would go out to the foundations. I would check with the development director. I would go to alumni, I would go to our board members, and I would constantly be trying to get funds because, as you will notice, once we had the apartments, then we had to get a new library.

There was so much renovation and so many buildings that I had to work in that, and it had to be more than thousand dollar gifts. So that was where the fund raising committees and those who were interested in that sort of thing became my right hand in the work of the president's office.

Riess: You got fifty thousand dollars from the Kresge Foundation.

Cunningham: Yes. Now, that was a foundation that we knew, by virtue of their reports and so forth, gave always to building. I had a connection through Mr. Coyle on our board whose wife had lived in Detroit and knew somone on the [Kresge Foundation] board. So that was one of the foundations to which I personally went directly East and talked there and explained what we were doing and [that] we were anxious to get going on our library because the funding for that was not going to come all from the government. It would have to come mostly from individual gifts and the grants.

Riess: You were always going after money for bricks and mortar.

Cunningham: Yes, for bricks and mortar, as well as scholarship funds. We needed scholarship funds because, as you notice from our reports, we were giving--and I've forgotten what year--up to fifty thousand dollars to students, but that was from our own CND income, which was not very much. So we realized that while there was some scholarship money that had been given by various individuals, and by the alumni and some that had been given in bequests, we had to raise more money for students, and not just the minority students that we had to help, but for all students who needed some financial aid.

The financial aid program across the country was becoming a very broad one, as you know, because the government funds were then going to be given. But we knew that we needed more than what the government funds would assign the students, and we had to be able to match those or over-match them in a sense. So the

Cunningham: funds that we needed were not only for faculty salaries, which was in itself a very great pressure, but to get money for student aid, and also money for the continued development of facilities.

Riess: Where did you get the faculty salary money?

Cunningham: In the first part, we were simply taking it from the tuition funds and from the living endowment fund; we were really taking it from current funds. But you can't go on that way because the costs for everything else were rising and we knew that we were certainly not giving adequate salaries. But as I told them all along, each faculty member, I said, "I never promised you a rose garden or a green garden." I just said, "We have wonderful things going for us here if you want to serve, but you will never make a fortune here." We have never deceived them from that point of view, although our salaries are fantastically higher now from then as I look back.

Riess: It's interesting about salaries. Dominican College got the Buck Foundation money, but still they have to juggle it to cover salaries.

Cunningham: That is correct, yes. It is not always easy when you get it for specific funds, I know that, although you look with a green eye at others, saying, "Oh, if only we had that!" But then you hear the president of that institution say, "Yes, but you don't know the problems that there are relative to that money." However, I'd say, "I haven't too many problems that a certain number of dollars wouldn't help!" [laughs] That's what I had to keep pursuing, funds for the various things that were always needed here. Then we came into the time of stress for preventive maintenance, but that is more current right now to what we are doing.

Riess: Is it under control now? Or is there still the constant, thankless problem?

Cunningham: When we said "under control," we referred to striving for a balanced budget, so that when we looked at our records we would not have an accumulated deficit. We have a small one now, but it's practically nothing. I think it's about $150,000 that we owe ourselves. When we get some "extra" money to put into it, we will do that. But that's not very much, I realize, and it is really because of the philosophy that I held that maintained we would not do what we couldn't pay for.

Certainly, many years ago, I would have been happy to give higher faculty salaries, but we simply couldn't, and then give the faculty good facilities to teach in, and students to teach;

Cunningham: we had to recruit hard to get good students. So it was sort of a circle. I would never call it a thankless task, I guess, because we have such a good college that it hasn't been thankless. It's hard, and everybody doesn't want to go out and search for funds and students. I'm not crazy about it myself, but if you have a good product and have the kind of disposition that makes you want to share it, it probably makes the job easier. You have to have a certain kind of personality to want to go out and be asking for money all of the time and asking it in a way that you don't turn people away. Yet it is something we all face, we face the "no." I've had no's; believe me, I've had no's!

Riess: But it sounds like you became very professional about it, knowing what was out there and asking for what you knew was possible.

Cunningham: Yes, I had people who helped me with this in our development office. Mr. Sherman was a very good support. We had early on two other development officers who worked hard. One was very good, Mary Murphy, who was a very fine woman. She was the one who worked with me in the beginning in setting up the Board of Regents. She had been herself a director of the Independent Colleges of Northern California and was a very fine woman in that field before women were as good in that or as allowable in it as they would be now.

Riess: What would you say were the great academic strengths of the college that you could sell to your foundations? Did you find that, in fact, that ended up altering the strengths of various departments?

Cunningham: The foundations--the bigger ones, of course--are more and more sophisticated. They are asked innumerable times a year, I suppose, for millions of dollars. So they have to review the person who is asking, and the organizations they represent; they have become very inquisitive, and rightfully so, about the reports of our accrediting committee. They don't take it just from the college president to say we are a fine college, we have a fine academic program. You have to have documents to back up everything. You have to show your certified public accountant reports, your annual reports, your financial report to the foundations. You have to have available copies to give them at a moment's notice. You also have to have reports from disinterested persons who are reviewing your academics, and that is where our accreditation report for our national accreditation for teacher education, and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the regional accreditation, all those documents are reviewed by committees in the foundation offices whose work it is to fine comb your college and its academic and fiscal standing.

Riess: And then the money would come to the areas that are strong?

Cunningham: When you write to foundations, you are writing for a certain project and you try to find out--this is if you are smart in doing it, if you learn, of course--where the interests of the foundation lie.

Sometimes the donors of the foundation funds have said, "This is to go only for major scientific research." Then our college wouldn't normally apply for that unless there was some special scientific research in a specific department. "Our foundation does not give to bricks and mortar," so you don't write to them when you are putting up a building. So you have to learn. It's an art and a business to study the foundations and study the people who know people on those boards who could know you and say, "Oh, yes, I have heard of your college." If you are completely unknown and you don't have any documents, you wouldn't stand much of a chance.

Riess: This college is known for teacher education and for music. Now, does that mean then that they are the things that continue to bring in money.

Cunningham: Not necessarily. Strangely enough, [for] the teacher education program, we don't ordinarily get money to support that program, though we did once receive a major grant for the education department. We must use tuition funds, normally. We received a fine grant recently for the humanities program. We also received a large one in social services, and smaller grants for the music department, for music scholarships.

But if there is a special interest of somebody on a board, or some particular governmental area that is having a pull or a push for quality in certain areas, then if we have the academic potential, we would appeal for that along those lines. We wouldn't appeal, of course, for what we might be weak in. We would appeal for broad programs in our liberal arts division.

Individual faculty members have obtained grants in educational programs, but the college as a whole only once, as I said, has obtained a big grant for the education program, and it was for programs within the teacher education program itself, which is, of course, what you are saying. We needed to help the young teachers be further advanced along the program lines that they would have to meet in the public schools for which we are preparing them.

Riess: If a sister applies for a grant, then I assume it goes through the regular channels?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, yes. Some have received individual grants for their studies, maybe for a scholarship toward some courses in higher education. Some of the sisters have had smaller grants to help them toward their own research. The chairman of the behavioral science department, Sister Roseanne Murphy, is a very brilliant young sister and has done wonderful work in her postdoctoral studies and has gotten grants for that, as well as for the department. She has done it both ways, for her department as well as for herself.

Religious Retreats as They Have Changed, and Summer Sessions

Riess: Looking at the annual reports, in 1966-67, the fall retreat was dropped. Up until that point, there had been a three or four-day retreat period in October, and then eventually in November.

Cunningham: You are talking about the student retreat?

Riess: The all-college retreat, yes.

Cunningham: That was a customary opportunity for all the Catholic students, and the college retreat had been held as a requirement every year, as you say. I don't remember the last year when one like that was held. You would have the record there. But that was in an era when we had, I suppose, a majority of Catholic students, and it was a carryover from what would have been happening down in the high school level. All of the Catholic high schools had held a three-day retreat once a year where the students would have their opportunity to go, just as you might have seen on last night's news. Do you watch the Channel 5 news at six o'clock?

Riess: No.

Cunningham: There was this whole segment on the retreat at Los Altos, the Jesuit Retreat House at El Retiro. It was not an ad, though it turned out to be a marvelous ad for it, for the adults especially in business needing to get away for a time to think and review themselves.

The retreat for students was a time when there was a cessation of classes, and there would be conferences by a priest--these were in the earlier days--on various subjects in the spiritual and religious life, and the students then were supposed to be quiet and be thinking on these days. But as we had many

Cunningham: more students, and as our evening classes developed, too, it wasn't feasible to have the three-day retreat. However, we didn't stop them completely. We still give the opportunity for a retreat, and details are posted by the Campus Ministry, as it is called today, on its bulletin boards.

Only a couple of weeks ago there was a campus retreat. They are held not just at one time when everybody was expected to go, but it is in a different context. You are not out of school, but maybe you would go on Thursday night if you didn't have classes on Friday, or you would go away Friday and have Saturday and Sunday in retreat. The group can go to one of our vacation places; we have one at Felton, a small house that can be used by students, and one of the priests goes, and perhaps a sister and the director of Campus Ministry, who just now is a young lay woman. Or the group may go to our lovely place at Carmel [Villa Angelica] or go to some other retreat house. So a retreat is still available but it's not in that formalized way in which it was up to the sixties.

Riess: The next year, incidentally, was the time that theology was required of everyone, after the accreditation group's recommendation. And by '69 or '70, the sister formation curriculum was no longer there.

Cunningham: It had served its purpose. Most religious congregations then, even though their numbers were smaller, would take as members only those who had had a college degree; then they didn't run up against the problem of striving to give the new members their religious educational development as a member of the religious congregation, and at the same time the academic, which was a great pressure. So that was how religious congregations were able then to phase out of that kind of an educational program.

Sometime we have to go back to the beginning of our new library. We skipped over the facility of the library that was built in the seventies.

Riess: Next time. I am just winding up. Your summer sessions, while we have a minute. You gave a place to them in the annual reports. Often there would be a rather diverse collection of people from foreign countries. What was that all about?

Cunningham: Summer sessions for many years were the only way for many teachers to get academic units during a compressed period of time. For some years we had a very large "summer week" (as well as the normal six-week period) when teachers, primarily, could attend all day to get one unit that would cross over interdisciplinary subjects. It gave them an interesting week, and

Cunningham: it would allow them, say, an academic unit or two. We would have hundreds of people down in the auditorium for that week. All day, every day for a week.

That went on for several years and then we went back to the more traditional schedule of, say, a winter session in the winter period, and a pre-summer session, a regular summer session, and a post-summer session. We were trying to make college courses available for those men and women who had different times when they could come; we provided faculty at any one of the times.

Riess: It's a very flexible place you run here! Were the summer sessions and the evening sessions profit making? I don't mean break even; I mean profit making. Did you set them up to be so?

Cunningham: Oh, they had to be because we couldn't have taken money away from our regular sessions. The amounts of money coming in for summer programs, tuition-wise, was less. It worked up to a comparable per-unit cost. They had to be able to clear their own costs.

Riess: I think profit making means that you have some left over.

Cunningham: Yes, I think they did. They had to be.

Riess: And in the evening division?

Cunningham: Yes, it did. Of course, and those funds went into the work of the total college because you would have so many more people for a shorter period of time for x-number of dollars--and that dollar increased, of course, as the years went on. I am not sure that as faculty salaries increased in those divisions that the amount of money has been as much, but again our reports would indicate that there has been good support. It has to be more than a break-even, of course, or why are we running it?

Riess: Exactly, but I mean you can get into the idea that you are running it for the good of the public, but you're not.

Cunningham: You are doing it in a two-fold way. You are giving an opportunity, but that opportunity has to be able to help the public that you have during the year, too.

Riess: I am always so amazed at the concept of the community college system in California. Totally free education.

Cunningham: That's right and certainly from our own community colleges around here, they have wonderful courses and wonderful educators in those programs. We get their transfers, so we know.

Riess: Your visitors in summer session 1963 were Rene Welleck from Yale; a Reverend Josef Goldbrunn from Germany; Kurt Reinhardt and Virgil Whitaker from Stanford; Karl de Bouvere from Amsterdam; a couple of novelists, Clayton Barbeau and Cornelia Jessey, and somebody from Valyermo. What was happening?

Cunningham: It was Father Vincent Martin, a Benedictine monk from Valyermo Retreat House, in southern California.

We wanted to bring to the campus people who were outstanding in their field, and who might be able to give one or two lectures that we would never be able to give during a regular session, or we were not able financially to get for any long periods of time. So it was the idea of getting a "name" lecturer, and giving a cross section of disciplines. They ran from the mathematics, science, religion, English, and art. The director of the summer session would find out during the year whether some of these scholars whom we might want to bring to CND were going to be in the Bay Area during the summer.

The priest from Amsterdam is now still on the faculty of the University of Santa Clara, Father de Bouvere. [He] came to our campus later on as a full-time faculty member in mathematics, a brilliant mathematician. So our idea was to bring to the mid-peninsula, at a college that some people would want to come to for x-lectures, a breadth in science and humanities that they couldn't get elsewhere and that we couldn't afford to bring in for a whole semester course.

Riess: It sounds very interesting, and very intellectual.

Cunningham: That's what we were trying to do.

Riess: I see the Junipero Serra Shop ran a couple of symposiums.

Cunningham: Yes, there were a couple of people there, Ethel Souza and Joseph Golden, who were outstanding Catholics in what we call the lay Catholic movement, Catholic action, and that sort of thing, and they ran a book shop in San Francisco on Maiden Lane.

V THE ISSUE YEARS, AND THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

[Interview 6: November 4, 1982]##

The Sixties Free Speech and Political Issues: The Black Angel

Riess: I sent you the Father Hesburgh interview because I thought it was addressing the sixties campus political issues and ferment and I wondered what kind of ferment there was here.

Cunningham: Although our campus was much smaller than many others that had national notoriety, we were close enough to Stanford and Cal to have picked up all of the vibrations that were emanating from those institutions. Naturally there was a flow of problems and concerns, I should say, that reached our small campus, both from the Kent State affair and Cambodia, and then later Vietnam, the pressures for staying away from anything that concerned war, all the protest against it.

Riess: Did anything actually happen? Was anything closed down?

Cunningham: Yes. I don't recall now all of the dates about this period, but if you remember, at the time of the Kent State affair, campuses all over the country--not just here, of course--began to be in an uproar over the whole situation, the world and the Cambodia. Ronald Reagan, then governor of California, sent out a telegram to all college presidents that every campus should cease classes and have some kind of a get together, or general meeting of minds about all these problems. I can remember being startled to receive a telegram from the governor saying that he wanted this done immediately, and to have these open so there would be discussions rather than destruction on the campus.

I called the administrative council together. We decided that we would organize a program, though there was not very much time for much preparation. We took immediate action to have a

Cunningham: complete study day and bring everybody, faculty and students alike, into a central place, the college dining room. There we could gather many students and there were opportunities for being close together and to have a study day on this whole thing, pro and con. The then-student body president, Linda De Mello, who, incidentally, is now and has been for a good number of years in the office of student affairs, was a very fine organizer.

The faculty got themselves organized so that various departments would make presentations, and this had to be done almost over night. They were to be able to answer questions, to give a history of the situations, and be present for information, clarification, and the unification of understanding. Rather than students just talking among themselves, where they wouldn't really know as much, [this was a chance to listen to] those who had a little bit more powers of observation from the background of age and situation.

Riess: Of course, the faculty must have had extremely divergent views.

Cunningham: Of course. So it was bringing everybody together on the campus. I know we set up platforms and loudspeakers, and stayed all day in discussions.

Later on--I am not sure of the date--at the time of the Vietnam situation, we had another similar gathering and we brought people from outside the campus to represent both points of view, to fight or not to fight. This, of course, was the national college uprising, so to speak. We wanted--the students wanted--to be a part of this whole collegiate/university scene, which all of their friends and groups in the area were doing at their own campuses.

I remember that a group of the male students wanted to see me in my office. (Of course, so many, when they were going into president's offices were [laughs] closing down the administration and whatnot!) They said they wanted to see me and they were some of the student leaders. It happened to be three boys. I don't think any of the girls came in at this time. I had them sit down with me, not knowing what they were there for! They wanted to ask me some questions, and it was really very interesting, because what they wanted to do was to bring up from the basement of the art studio a statue of an angel kneeling and put it in the St. Mary's patio and drape it in black as a prayer kind of protest against Kent State and the problems of war that had caused that uprising.

Cunningham: I don't know how many other college presidents were faced with that kind of problem. It was one I was very happy to take care of immediately! I didn't even know we had this statue. Do you know the studio that is at the bottom at the hill? There is a basement in what had been the parish church at one time, as I had mentioned to you. When it was a church, there had been some statues that the pastor did not take when they built the new church, and I didn't even know that the angel was there. But the students had found out. I said, "By all means, we'll get our men to lug it up and you can do anything you want as a visual protest."

It was interesting, because it really showed something, I suppose, that we have tried to say we were doing--a sense of values, not a destructive protest, but a protest of prayer. Now, it sounds simplistic, but the students thought it up themselves. I didn't even know, nor did the faculty know, the statue existed. Maybe somebody in the art department did and sent students down to find something in the basement and they saw it. This angel stayed on our quad several weeks. It had a big black banner draping it, and a meaningful sign.

But the day, or day and a half I described with the faculty--naturally there were people on both sides as to the army group that had gone into Kent State and why they had fired on the students, what had caused that and, of course, we didn't know very much. It had just happened, so we were all talking from a certain sense of ignorance and yet holding back not to make ultimate decisions or judgments until we knew more than we knew at that particular moment. We did close down. We had the discussion. Students could say anything they wanted, no holds barred from both sides, and we did that twice.

That first time we didn't have any outsider. There wasn't time to get anybody. It was too close to every other college that was doing the same thing. Yet later on, with more protests about Vietnam, Kent State, the Cambodia situation, we did bring in speakers from the outside, from the Bay Area. I know that we brought those who were pacifists and those who were all for going out to war. This outside group was invited in to discuss in any way they chose.

I know that the students also marched with arm bands, some in San Carlos and Redwood City. We have newspaper clippings showing that protest, too.

Riess: As a Notre Dame delegation?

Cunningham: Yes, that's correct. The students wanted to march and I said, "Fine, go ahead. Just remember to keep it peaceful, don't be destructive. You are protesting destruction, so don't you be destructive in your protest," and they didn't. They carried banners and wore arm bands, and we have the pictures showing it. I don't suppose there were a hundred that marched. The irony of it, it was a very windy and cold day! [laughs] That was going to squelch some of the exuberance.

There were those who were vehemently opposed one side to the other, but there was absolutely no destruction on the campus; verbal expression, yes, but that's the freedom of speech that we encouraged. I just said, "Remember, you are protesting problems that are very terrible and that are leading to death, so just use words."

Riess: Yes, do as you would have others do to you.

Cunningham: That's right, exactly.

Riess: I would wonder whether it would end up being a kind of prayerful support.

Cunningham: That was the symbol and this was from the students. As I said, we, the faculty, didn't even know about this. They thought that up themselves and it was a group of the fellows and the girls who wanted to use that as a symbol.

Riess: Did you ever have a moment of second thoughts about it when they proposed that?

Cunningham: Oh, no, not at all.

Riess: Could you imagine a different response from your trustees or the parents or your community?

Cunningham: No. I know that we told our governing board at the time. We reported to them because they had to know what our campus was doing in the light of all of the other things that were in the paper about other campuses. We said how we were handling it, and that Reagan had asked for the cancellation of classes--he didn't demand it--and this was how we were handling it. So our board knew our plans and, as I said, I can't imagine that there would be any problem. People verbally could dispute one side or the other, but that's all right.

Riess: When Berkeley was discovering free speech earlier in the sixties, had there been an equivalent echo here?

Cunningham: I would imagine so. Now, remember from my vantage point in the office of administration, I didn't hear directly, but I am sure in the history classes, the political science classes, I know the professors, of course, would have had anyone who wanted to ask about it, whether it was during a class that pertained to that particular subject or not. I know that there were buzz sessions, shall we say. That was simply the verbal reaction to the situations of the time, whether you were on one side or the other. But there were no incidents. As I said, there could be hurt feelings from one side, but that is all right.

Riess: How about campus speakers? There were the Herbert Apthekers and the Eldridge Cleavers and so on. Was the campus a forum for any radicals?

Cunningham: That is what I am trying to remember. We had some student "radicals" similar to types that you mentioned. I just would have to go back to the files and check the names.

Riess: Prior to that Berkeley was going through its period of being an open forum under Clark Kerr. That was the issue, whether Communist speakers could appear on campus. I know the University of Santa Clara under Donohoe made a decision to open it up and to consider that that was part of the definition of free speech.

Cunningham: But that's why we did it the second time, the second meeting.

Riess: I mean early in the sixties.

Cunningham: I don't remember that we had any of the--we would have been too small to bring any one of those, if you had one of those want to come to this campus. But I know that some of our students probably visited the other campuses, either on or off class time, and knew all about this and were participating obliquely, shall we say. I know that they brought one of the most [ardent] pacifists at the time, Dr. Robert McAfee Brown. I know that he came on campus, but I don't remember the names of the other people who were violently for violence. [laughter]

Riess: Donohoe was saying at that time that "The formal work of the university is not to prepare monks and nuns--"

Cunningham: No, that's right.

Riess: "--but citizens of the world, a world encompassing both Mao and Robert Welch, opposed to no man."

The Peace Symposium and Norman Cousins--
and Mortimer Adler and Thomas Merton

Cunningham: Perhaps this is where I could mention the summer program, the peace symposium, that we had. That was when I first became personally acquainted with Norman Cousins and used him as my guide and mentor in setting up this symposium. We brought from Lagos the UN representative, Chief S. O. Adebo who was the chairman of the UN for that time. You know how they rotate. I had gone East to meet with Norman Cousins, and went around with him to various important people in the New York area to plan this peace symposium that our own administrative council and a group out here had talked about.

Riess: What year was this?

Cunningham: It was in 1966, July.

Riess: Why was Norman Cousins your contact?

Cunningham: Norman Cousins was a contact through one of our young faculty members who was doing graduate work and research back in the East and was a friend of his. She suggested that I come back and make our plans with Norman Cousins in New York. He had come out here before, so I had met him already, and he was very open to having me meet him back in New York with Sister Mary Timothy, as she was known at that time. Then he planned with us the series of meetings that I would have, including a visit to the UN and to the office of Chief Adebo. I went to one of the Roosevelt sons, James Roosevelt. I had marvelous entree there.

Riess: When was Pacem in Terris?

Cunningham: This was after that. Norman Cousins had been very involved in the peace work from his own inner feelings.

Riess: I remember the Hiroshima maidens.

Cunningham: Yes, that's right. Cousins had gone, if you remember, on a mission to Khrushchev for John XXIII, and as a result of that meeting, Cardinal Slipyi, who had been interned, was released, as were several others. He had been an emissary on another occasion between John Kennedy and Pope John and Khrushchev. I was very fortunate to have that access to a man who was so important worldwide in the efforts for peace. Because he liked the Notre Dame sisters whom he had met, and the faculty whom he met here, he was willing to do anything he could and that was why we spent a whole year in preparation for the CND Peace

Cunningham: Symposium of the following summer. It was a very, very wonderful experience, as I said, meeting and bringing to CND the African chief who was the United Nations Nigerian representative, and especially Norman Cousins himself, and the whole program and theme of Pacem in Terris was marvelous. It brought people from the area and from distances; it was almost a full week that had national coverage of the entire program.

Riess: People enrolled and stayed on campus?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, yes, and came on to the various events also.

Riess: Was anything published?

Cunningham: A booklet? No, but there were newspaper accounts of it, of course.

Riess: What was lasting about it?

Cunningham: There was no printed series of papers of the talks that were given at the time but, of course, it was taped. We weren't quite as up on that as perhaps we could have been to make something printed available for later. But it had coverage at the time, and it was a truly wonderful program. I am sorry I didn't think to even bring to you the program. I would have to go down to our archives for that.

Riess: How many and what kinds of people did it reach?

Cunningham: It was held in the Notre Dame auditorium, seating about 700. [It reached] people from all over, and it was open to the whole general public.

Riess: Is Norman Cousins Catholic?

Cunningham: No. And religion had nothing to do with it, except it was our college that was sponsoring it and it brought us national and international coverage of sorts.

Riess: Cousins is a very interesting man.

Cunningham: We have kept in touch with him, and two years ago he was brought on campus as a surprise to me.

Riess: When you were retiring?

Cunningham: Yes, at that famous Founder's Day, 1979. He came because of his devotion and affection for the college and for me and for those whom he knew particularly.

Riess: There is a scholarship in his name. Has he endowed that?

Cunningham: No, he gave a scholarship some years ago, and now that has been added to the scholarship endowment, that particular grant, and we have a Norman Cousins scholarship. That hasn't been kept up specifically because it wasn't added to after several contributions. So it is in the general endowment of scholarships. He is an honorary fellow of the college, as you probably saw. We made him an honorary fellow of the college some years ago.

Riess: Yes, and you have an interesting group there that I would like to talk about.

I watched the Mortimer Adler discussion from Aspen on television the other night. Someone referred to Adler as a Thomist. What does that mean?

Cunningham: A Thomist means that as a philosopher one follows the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, the Thomistic philosophy which is the basis of scholastic philosophy. I am not an expert, but that is the frame of reference in philosophy. That was the dominant theological and philosophical school of the Middle Ages based on the authority of the Latin fathers, of Aristotle, and of his commentators.

Adler has long been a prominent figure in philosophy in education. One talk he gave in San Francisco, it was reported that after he had delivered his theories and so forth, someone, probably from the news media, got up and asked him (now I am simply commenting on what I remember was reported at the time), "Mr. Adler, how is it since you have this stance and you hold these things to be true and so forth, that you are not a Catholic?"

He replied (in words to this effect), "You must remember that faith is a gift." He had the intellectual view, but he had not received that (quote) "gift" of the faith to make it necessary for him to change his religious viewpoint, even though his philosophical viewpoint seems so Catholic. He is a very, very honest and honorable man, but he is not a Catholic.

Riess: Getting around to the category of "influential thinkers," I am now steeped in Thomas Merton's book and Thomas Merton has just discovered [Etienne] Gilson, and it reminds me of how momentous these discoveries can be for people. I wonder, in your Catholic background and in the development of your educational philosophy, are there people that you think of, or writers, or influential encounters?

Cunningham: I have been rather an avid reader when I have had time, and I have tried to make time for reading. Because of the pressures of time, I did a considerable amount of probably cursory reading. As the Church's new thinkers and writers were coming forth, if that is the period that you are talking about, as the new thinking was opening and more liberal interpretations were given by various and sundry writers on the international scene, my reading was perhaps much more on the reading of the reviewer of the writers rather than my going to the original sources. I did not have the time to do as much in depth reading as one would like to do for such very important and very serious concerns. Therefore, there were many occasions when there were meetings held for presentations about various speakers, writers, of the time, and I tried to attend those where I would hear from those scholars who had studied far more than I could ever possibly do.

Riess: We still haven't named names. I assume that we are talking about Teilhard de Chardin.

Cunningham: Oh, yes.

Riess: That's the kind of person?

Cunningham: Yes. Certainly I did some reading about him, but for understanding Teilhard in his own works--of course, there were excerpts from some of his writings that I did read--to understand him, one has to be a scientist really, I think, understanding the cosmos as only he could explain it, and that isn't exactly easy. If I had been simply doing research at the time, I would have been much more into the origins rather than the reviews and the discussions of those, but it just wasn't possible for me to do that. Certainly with Merton, I read as much as I could of him, and I am not saying that he is less of a thinker than Teilhard, but his presentations are different.

Riess: He is much more accessible.

Cunningham: Accessible, yes, and therefore it was more of that kind of person rather than the ultimate scholar as Teilhard was that I would have been more familiar with and who would have had more influence in a sense in liberalizing thinking. I would really say that Merton's line of action that he finally took as a member of a cloistered and silent order is not anything that drew me personally. It was his thinking and his reaching out to nature, his reaching out to people of all kinds that I think has been most important. He saw and worked as far as he could with every kind of human being and every type who touched him and with whom he could come into contact.

Cunningham: I think I was more impressed with the fact that his influence reached every conceivable kind of person rather than just one set of a type. It was more catholic in that sense--that's catholic with a small c. Mortimer Adler's reach was to the very, very, intellectual. With Merton, it was every kind of person who was touched by him in one way or another, I think, and that is what has appealed to me in him, not that I would be an imitator of the way he lived. Certainly, I was never touched by that. It was not my vocation in that way. Just again as, say, Dorothy Day, while we had her here and I read about her and admired her, again, she was able to touch everybody in her way, not [in a way] that I would imitate but that I have admired tremendously.

Notre Dame University and Father Hesburgh: The President's Job##

Riess: Hesburgh also says one of the roles of a college president is to be exemplary for the students.

Cunningham: Of course, one would certainly assume that anyone in the position of leadership in any institution of higher education should be one whom the students would be able to see has tried to accomplish perhaps in a very small way what the educational system in his or her institution has been about.

Father Hesburgh himself certainly has been an inspiration. I can remember one occasion meeting him at a national meeting in San Francisco. We were at the Palace Hotel and I said, "I am the president of the College of Notre Dame speaking to the president of the University of Notre Dame." [laughter] I said, "That's where our differences begin!" He laughed. He was a very warm and a lovely person to talk to.

I visited the campus of Notre Dame University on my famous tour, but I did not see him at that time. I have followed with interest the work that he has done and I think one of the things that has impressed me most--and it was evident in his own defense of why he was away from campus so much--he had to know what was going on elsewhere in his position as a university president; he had to make contacts, and those contacts, that knowledge, and the work that he did while he was on various and sundry committees and boards were important to him in the other sixty percent of his time on the university campus.* There might have been for

*Referring to a discussion in the Turney interview.

Cunningham: him a criticism of absenteeism, minimal though in a sense it was, yet it was of great value and I think that he was absolutely right in that. You can't just sit in an office and expect everybody to come to you; one has to go out.

When I talked about Merton, I think that although he, in the part of the life about him that we more often read, was actually in the Trappist Order, he had already been out over many parts of the world for a good number of years, yet he did not cut off the earlier contacts he made, so that when he was able to write so much in the interval between the time he entered the Trappists, and then became well known by his writings, he could have an audience that could accept what he would say. They might not agree with it, but they could accept it because of his personal contact with those with whom he had had meetings or correspondence. In some instance, he wasn't able to have the meetings in the latter period of his life.

I think it's important that a college and university president have as many good contacts as are feasible in his or her position, because it brings more validity to your position if you have met many people, if you have been out with administrators, educators from near and far. That's why in certain circumstances I had taken on work with a special group because of the contacts that I could have with so many people in education; that is also why I made it a point to go to national meetings every year for at least the first ten or fifteen years of my presidency. Not that I was going to give so much, although I was on several panels on several occasions, but that I would get and receive much from others directly and then be able to bring those ideas back. That is something that I think is important.

Riess: About what percentage would you say that you were away, just to compare it to Hesburgh's forty percent?

Cunningham: Oh, heavens, it wasn't anything, of course, like Father Hesburgh's amount of time away. Possibly ten or fifteen percent of my time would have been an average of my off-campus activities.

Riess: Did Father Hesburgh become a spokesperson for Catholic education?

Cunningham: Yes, I think the University of Notre Dame has been really a lodestar for many in Catholic higher education, and I would feel it's because of the fact that it kept certainly the aims of a Catholic institution with a capital C and at the same time was very catholic with a small c in everything that touched humanity in the sense of its programs, its academic direction, its being a part of the university scene on almost every level.

Cunningham: I know there are other institutions that have done that, but I suppose it is because Father Hesburgh himself has been such an outstanding leader and has not been just national, but international, that he has brought a spark that certainly I have felt has been very, very important. He was not afraid to take his stands openly, and certainly there were many who disagreed with him, but his university has stood by him and has made the reputation that it has really through his inspiration, and I hope it can continue. I know he is going on for a few more years, and I thank the Lord for that because Notre Dame, and not just the Rockne-Notre Dame but the Hesburgh-Notre Dame is the important one, and he has done a tremendous amount.

That's, I think, the influence of people, and I think that's extremely important. You can't hide yourself away in any kind of an office and expect everybody to come; you have to go out, and it isn't always easy to do it, either.

Opening the College to the World: The Centennial Celebration Planning

Riess: You use the word "afraid" and I will refer once again to the history of the University of Santa Clara. At the end of that book a question was posed about what was holding Catholic colleges back for so long. One of the answers was a sense of being afraid to reveal the funding problems--just reveal in some way, come out into the open.

Cunningham: I suppose that for many years previous, before there were the national organizations of educators, whether in the field of accreditation, fund raising, all of those things that today are just a part of our living and being, one was more apt to be inbred, and doing things within your own community, the small community in which the institution was settled, the town or the city. For many of us, we were a big institution in a small city, and then as the city grew, we became smaller and maybe the city grew larger.

But as the world opened up through the media of communication, and man realized as John Donne said, that "no man is an island," those institutions that were smaller and were much more ingrown had to realize that to be giving the right kind of education, they could no longer stay isolated. Technology gave the opportunities; the era of Sputnik opened everything. Educators, while their minds certainly were open, yet perhaps had kept so much to themselves in these small institutions. Now they had to open that up and give out [the message] of what maybe that institution could do.

Cunningham: As an example, say, the Peace Symposium at CND that we talked about. That could not have been done just in the framework of Belmont alone. It had to have something, someone, to go out to a wider world to bring back. So there is no longer that keeping everything in. If you were going to get from others, you had to be able to give and open up and reveal what made you tick, what made you do things in the past, and now what was going to change the tempo of the way you were operating.

Of course, that began in the sixties internationally with the whole world explosion of ideas and things. I don't think any institution could survive if it just kept as a very, very inbred and withdrawn kind of institution.

Riess: Particularly for a Catholic women's college, it's taking a risk of getting the feet wet.

Cunningham: Oh, yes, and getting splashed by others who perhaps thought you were going to be too radical in some of the moves that seem ridiculous to even use the word radical about today. We were making changes that were going to be perhaps difficult to accomplish, but we had to have a certain amount of faith that if we were doing the right job, if we had people who were understanding, lay people who worked with us, lay leaders outside of education, who gave us advice, and whom we consulted from areas of business, from industry, from education in areas other than here with our group, some of whom became board members and advisors, then we were going to have to take risks and maybe take a big step into something that was going to cause a splashing for awhile. We had to do it; we just wouldn't be around if we didn't.

At the time of our centennial preparation, and that's in the mid-sixties, one of the things that we felt that we had to do was to broaden our constituency, the people who know about us; we could not just stay involved only in our small Bay Area institution, but we had to be more widely known. You may want to defer this until another time?

Riess: No.

Cunningham: So we looked at our historical past, looked at the dates that were symbolic to us, considered what was present, and around '65 and '66 we realized that in two years we would be having a charter centennial and that was a significant time for looking ahead and for going back to realize what we had done a hundred years ago. We studied how we could celebrate that hundred years and project--not necessarily another hundred years--but make our reasonable projections.

Cunningham: We spent really three years in studying the potential, studying our past, how much we had made steps forward. We looked at the church-changing situation, the religious life-changing situation, and the world explosion in scientific developments. We were bombarded on all sides by what was going to be the potential of the future. Looking at that, we decided that 1968 would be a year then in which we would make some giant steps forward. That was the reason that we chose that time for the centennial, because it had a significance to our history, it had a significance to our connection with the state, it had significance with our charter (which was given in 1868), and with the educational developments over the years. Those were the years in which we were planning whether or not we would go coed, what would be our planning for facilities, what would be our planning for fiscal security to do the things that we thought we wanted to do.

So we engaged a special consultant to work with our board.

Riess: The consultant was to consult on the celebration or on the planning?

Cunningham: On the whole thing.

Riess: The planning for the future?

Cunningham: Right, the planning. Do you want to just turn that off for a second? [tape interruption]

Concurrently with the planning for the program, we planned for the development of the college, physical planning, and for some of the academic. These two booklets will show how far we were projecting.* Now, as you know, the minute you project, there are changes, so in your reviewing of these you will see that there were things that were accomplished immediately and that already have been changed.

That was the plan for the physical, and this is the physical and fiscal that were given out during the charter year, but we did not do it without having very fine reviews of our whole potential and the campus as a whole. You can't say, "I want money for this, we need to do this," without an analysis. The analysis from the point of view of the academic, of course, would be evident in our accreditation booklet, and these were from the financial and facilities direction.

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*The Long Range Campus Plan for the College of Notre Dame, August 1967, and Master Plan.

Riess: How did you choose Lackey, Hamilton, Blewett?

Cunningham: They were recommended to us as being very fine architects and land planners. That was the firm that did the analysis, and they took months, as you can well imagine. They had to bring in, of course, those working in the soil and in the whole physical set up of the plant because we knew if we were going to develop from the point of view of expansion, we had to know what would be feasible, how it would be possible.

We had a centennial steering committee set up, as you will see listed, and they worked with the chairman and our board committees at the time to get as much encouragement and to get names of many people in the West and people known to us in business and industry, education and politics to lend their names and encouragement. It was a broad section there.

Riess: This is a very impressive list of people.*

Cunningham: There were others who were asked. Some whom we really wanted to have in that group also felt that they did not want to give their name if they did not give financial support, and we had to accept that. It meant that those [on the list] gave some kind of financial support--not all, of course, but they were willing to join in with those to have this celebration. And, of course, we had meetings in San Francisco and we had meetings in San Jose because we span the peninsula area.

We contacted all our alumni. Communications were sent out to all--to the parents--that this is what we were going to do, and we would keep them apprised. That's listed in those various papers that went out as to how we were going to do that, what was going on and what we were hoping to do. So they knew in advance the kind of thing we were doing.

Riess: Did it work?

Cunningham: Yes, it did work. It worked in that as a result the newspaper coverage for the time was very good for a small college. People were always saying to me, "Why aren't we in the paper?" They wanted us on the front page of the paper. I said, "We could get on the front page of the Chronicle and the Examiner and the New York Times if we do something horrendous. You don't always get in there for doing something excellent." But we did actually

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*Appended.

Cunningham: get some very good editorials at the time in our major papers recognizing the contribution that the CND had made, and approving of the plans that we were having for the future and encouraging us to go forward.

Now, when you ask, did it work, I don't know whether you mean did it work financially. Yes, it worked financially because the building that we were striving to get funds for at the specific time of the centennial was the library, and that need was fulfilled. The library wasn't opened until later because we had to start collecting funds and, as you remember, my philosophy is we were not going to put it up until we have the last cent. We were not able to get a loan on that building as the government loans for academic facilities fizzled in the early Nixon administration, so we had to hold back a little on our ideas and change the plans for the library.

But our centennial work did accomplish a great deal. We were able to begin the drives for our scholarship endowment to a greater degree than we did before. We certainly broadened our constituency. We became much better known in the area and although everything that is listed in the centennial booklet up to 1976 and beyond--of course, we were doing that almost ten years in advance--hasn't been accomplished yet, there are areas there in which we have been able to accomplish those plans and become much larger than before yet remain within the framework of just how large we wanted to become.

Riess: You had William Buckley at your charter day?

Cunningham: We got him because during the centennial we wanted to bring people to the campus who were nationally and perhaps internationally known. We wanted to have people see our campus. So one of the most dynamic, outstanding, and certainly outspoken gentlemen of the literary world of the day, the speakers' world, was William Buckley. We pursued it through friends of his. (Of course, there were many who would come to see Buckley, to hear him, because they <u>didn't</u> like him, as well as those who came because they <u>did</u> like him.) We had a dinner preceding it, and it was open to the public. We had a full auditorium, of course, that night.

Riess: Did you sit next to Buckley at dinner?

Cunningham: Oh, yes! [laughs]

Riess: Oh, tell me how it was. How did you keep up your conversational end? I mean, how does anyone?

Cunningham: I wonder about it now. You just try not to think about "who am I sitting next to." Just as an aside, he wasn't half as intimidating to me as at one time much later sitting next to Edward Teller here on the campus. That was eye opening, to be next to somebody like that, but that was on another occasion.

So we did get Buckley. We also got Karl Stern, who is a very fine speaker. We tried to get them in the various subject areas.

Riess: He spoke on psychiatry and religion.

Cunningham: Yes, and then we had Joseph Pieper from the literary intellectual point, that kind of very intellectual searching. He was a European scholar who was brought to the campus. We tried to cover the spectrum of interest that there would be, and this calendar of 1968 gives some of the highlights of other campus events.

Riess: There were many centennials in those years. Berkeley was having its centennial.

Cunningham: Yes, CND received its charter at the same time. Berkeley and Notre Dame can walk side-by-side in any academic procession, [laughs] because of that. We were the small seed and they, of course, were a full blown institution. We were simply, I suppose, a bush by 1968 and they were a whole forest in educational institutions. But it's true. It's the history of California because we came in 1851. Remember, I am going back further than the actual centennial. There is that historical background to the college.

Riess: I have talked to wives of college presidents and they often chat with their illustrious dinner partners about their children and make other small talk. But you are the president. So what is your small talk or large talk?

Cunningham: I think you would recognize, of course, that I wouldn't be alone at dinner with them! [laughs] Some of the principal members of the board were at dinner that night, and there were a couple who were friends of his. In fact, the chairman of the board, Mr. Edward Keil, knew him personally, as did Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Madison. So I did not have to flounder very much.

Granted, I certainly would not even pretend to be any kind of a match for sparring on any great theme with William Buckley, and the dinner, of course, preceded the talk, so there was nothing very much that I could talk about. He was a very

Cunningham: delightful person, and we probably had ten or twelve, I think, at dinner. That was held down in the blue dining room. It was "tres intime," as we'd say.

Then we had a reception up in Ralston Hall, following. So it was a dinner, the talk, and then bringing people back to Ralston Hall for a champagne reception afterward.

Riess: That is a way to get into the papers, to have somebody like Buckley.

Cunningham: Oh, of course, exactly. That is what we wanted to do, to bring some national figure out, controversial though he was and is. But just the same, when we were able to meet his fee and fit it into his schedule, it was a perfectly delightful and exciting event on campus.

Riess: He didn't do it for nothing.

Cunningham: No!

Faculty Development, and Lines of Communication

Riess: I see that in 1969 and 1970 and 1971 you had weekend study seminars at Villa Angelica in Carmel.

Cunningham: That's right. That again was a means of getting our faculty together other than just on the campus at meetings here, and of giving them an opportunity to have some time more than just a casual campus meeting would allow. Since we have the villa, two buildings at Carmel that I have mentioned earlier that were available, we were able to have faculty seminars there, and those were very productive for the faculty who were able to come. Some were able to stay the whole weekend and some could come down for a day or two, come by the day.

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Cunningham: [One of those seminars was on computers.] We wanted to keep up with the developments, the opportunities for current communication and how we were to make use of them. Many could not get away for a summer program, or maybe another weekend, so we would try to bring specialists in that to our faculty, not just on the campus but away from it, where they could concentrate on it for whatever number of dates. It usually opened on Friday night and was closed Sunday night.

Riess: How has your faculty communication been over the years, if you can assess that?

Cunningham: I would say that has been one of our strengths. The administration wing of the college is a smaller segment of the larger building up at St. Mary's Hall. The faculty offices, most of them, were in St. Mary's Hall, and the administrative offices were in St. Mary's Hall. So we were never more than several feet away or yards away from either one. The faculty rooms, their lounge rooms, were on the ground floor of St. Mary's.

There have been disadvantages to that from the point of view of not really having enough space. We did not have the building space to have people all over the campus, although ultimately that has had to happen. As the buildings were designed, there was a physical closeness that has had very good psychological and academic developments. The faculty members at large did not have to go far to stop in at any administrator's door, and I can say over the years our doors were always open--and I mean physically open. On occasion, you might find an administrator's door closed during the day when there was a serious telephone call going on or something very personal during which you did not wish an interruption.

By and large, the faculty-administration encounters have been very easily made on both sides. Administrators could go easily down into any faculty office and--this held for students also--at times you would find at an administrator's office both faculty and students waiting outside. [laughs] They both had to wait their turn. Now, it is true that administrators would also set aside conference time for longer meetings, but most of our offices really operated with an open door policy.

Riess: You didn't have a policy of faculty getting in touch with the academic dean first about whatever it was, and she becoming the liaison. It was more direct.

Cunningham: There were lines of command, and lines of academic governance. Certain things pertained solely to the academic. Occasionally I had to say to somebody, "That really falls within the purview of Sister Rosemarie Julie"--or whoever was academic dean at the time. "I am interested in what you have to say, but you really have to follow through with whatever comes out of her discussions with you."

Our administrative meetings were held regularly. The faculty could bring to a representative on the committee whatever concerns they had. The subject might be brought up on the agenda, but they could also come and present to rank and tenure, to the

Cunningham: budget and finance committees, whatever their needs were. Or they would be sent for to explain something that maybe the committee needed to know and of which the administrator perhaps didn't have all of the knowledge.

Because the main part of the campus is the upper level, and the patio and coffee shops are available, informal meetings of the faculty and administrators and students have been confined really by the direction of the building. It is true now we have spread down more. We have Tabard and Cuvilly. There is a little enclave there. But by the same token, you are drawn to the upper campus for close contact. The library is there, the patio--it's an open kind of situation and a going back and forth, the campus end with the library, the dining hall, the main classroom building there. It's true that there are a few offices that are at a distance, but they are rare.

It has been a working together kind of situation, and it still is really. As we grow even more--and I don't know how much more building there will be in the future, but I know that this particular building [Ralston Hall] is going to be open for more offices after the sisters-faculty residence is completed--there will be another direction taken then, but that is in the future still.

Riess: Father Hesburgh says that decision making should be "what's right, not what's popular; don't expect praise, expect criticism; don't do it alone, gather the best up front with you," and he had a large administrative setup as a result of that kind of philosophy. Was that something that you also tried to effect--to have a large administrative staff?

Cunningham: We did have the administrative committee and the various college committees, some of which had been, of course, started before I came on campus, and then developed, and the model changed perhaps as times changed. But my own role has been really to delegate as much as possible because no one is going to work wholeheartedly if it is simply an imposition from above.

It is true that there were some decisions that only I could make finally, and I had to make them, I suppose, sometimes with blood, sometimes with sweat, and I have to admit a few times with tears! [laughter] That sounds very noble doesn't it! But for the most part, even with the decisions that had to be different from a viewpoint that had been presented to me, I did not find rebellion. It wasn't perhaps an aggreeable decision that had to be made, and sometimes that was on the basis of budget and finance which, of course, touches many people, or on the basis of some pet project. Ultimately I had to make the decision.

Cunningham: [I tried to work] "by consensus," a modern phrase, but by talking together and letting people see what the problems would be if one frame of reference were taken more than another. Now, I suppose the problems that were most acute would be those that would involve a financial burden, and that was where I very often had to say a strong "no," because I did not want to have the college go into debt. The administrators of a division would come to me and talk to me, and sometimes I was able to make changes or adjustments; we worked at negotiating it. But that could not always be done; sometimes it had to be an unpleasant decision.

Inner Struggles, Spiritual Strengths

Riess: Where do you get your support in a really hard moment? What did you turn to?

Cunningham: I suppose in some instances it had to be an inner strength, if it was something in which I couldn't go out for any additional advice. On some occasions I did have support from members of the board or the administration.

Riess: On the inner strength theme, maybe you can talk a little bit more about that.

Cunningham: I would think any leader has to be strong--you have to know who you are. Now, that expression to me in a sense is foreign. People are always saying today, "I wonder if she knows who she is," or are studying to know who they are, and all this sort of thing, from a psychological point of view. I have never even analyzed that, but I suppose I have had people say to me, "But you always knew who you were." Well, I don't understand in a sense and--I think I said this to you earlier--I never analyzed it that way. I suppose it would be a certain kind of security, a security with one's person. How you get that? I suppose you get it from your background. You certainly get it from your faith in what you are doing is right.

No matter what your spiritual faith is, there has to be a conviction, I think, and then there has to be a sense of, "I can't help it if they are not going to like me for saying this." You have to be, I suppose self-effacing in a sense when you think of making a decision that is not going to be totally accepted. (I don't know whose decisions are ever totally accepted.) But you have to be able to stand up within yourself and say, "I know I am not going to be popular. It is going to lose me someone's esteem or friendship, but I feel that if this is honestly what I have to do for the college, then so be it."

Riess: A kind of depersonalizing of it? Is that what you are saying?

Cunningham: No, I am not really. I am saying it is a very personal thing, I think.

Riess: But one of the ways that you can transcend the personal problem is to say that "I am here on earth to do this. This is my job. It's not me; I am an emissary."

Cunningham: Yes, that's true and you have to be able then to accept what is going to be the result of your decision and the acceptance sometimes of applause, and on occasion it can be boos or maybe the boos are only from a small number and you know they are going to hurt. But that's why I say it isn't depersonalizing. It means you know ahead of time that you are going to be hurt by making a decision that is perhaps in a sense hurting others, but you have to do it anyway.

Riess: But it is the you as the job.

Cunningham: Yes, but sometimes when it has affected people whom you like and for whom there had to be a decision that is going to create a problem, then it does hurt personally as well as officially, shall we say.

Riess: So you have prayed about things and gotten clear answers?

Cunningham: Certainly, I have prayed. My own vocation as a sister at Notre Dame gives me certain times--set to my own schedule, of course--for personal prayer and reaching out to God for help and strength; that has given me, of course, courage to do things that have been hard for me, maybe because I was going to have to take a stand or maybe because I didn't want to do something, and yet I had to officially. Maybe I just didn't want to make some special appearance or whatever it would be.

Certainly, the strength that I would get for that would be from prayer which would be very personal to me. I don't mean the official chapel prayers or prayers of the church, but I mean prayers perhaps in church that were private between me and God, or at any other place. You don't have to pray just at church. We have the whole world in which to pray, and it's true that one has--and that is what I meant when I said the inner strength, you get the inner strength just as you take exercise to give you physical strength, then you take spiritual exercise for getting your inner strength.

In fact, if you remember hearing anything about the Jesuits, they speak of the spiritual exercises at St. Ignatius, and those spiritual exercises are what we call retreats. So you can have

Cunningham: a mini-retreat of a day or a mini-mini one for a time just to go away from everything that seems to be encompassing you. It's a necessity for all people, for some more than others. Some can live within the madding crowd all of the time. Some have to go far from the madding crowd and then come back.

Riess: How does transcendental meditation fit into all of that? That is a kind of going away.

Cunningham: I know what you are referring to, but in our own religious life and spiritual life, especially the sisters of Notre Dame, our training in prayer has been in a way different from how you express transcendental meditation. My own background [is] of the Jesuit kind of spirituality where you go away by putting yourself in another place, a time and place--for example, a scriptural time and place--and try to go into that.

If you read scripture, you know there are certain elements in it, certain phrases, in the New Testament, certain themes that have made an impression on you in reading, or in hearing and you think, "Oh, if only I could get into that or talk to Christ as he was there." In our spiritual training then, it is to try to get away spiritually. You can't always get away physically from everybody, but you can within yourself and just try to get back by a period of calmess--which, of course, is a basis, I know, for transcendental meditation--and bring yourself back as quietly and calmly as you can physically, not in the throes of some big, harried pressure job.

You can make small pleas for prayer or help, I know, while you are doing something that is horrendously difficult, but in preparation for what you know is going to be difficult, then you have to have the time to get away within yourself, quiet time, and then to use the scriptures, if that is the way you would like to try to get peace and an answer and a sense of where everything really is.

Riess: That is very interesting. Would you go to the same piece of scripture because it has the power to evoke that feeling or image instantly? Like the equivalent of a mantra?

Cunningham: I suppose you would say, like the Jesus prayer, that would be a mantra from the Christian point of view. You are using it from the Eastern point of view.

I am not one personally who can just--I don't know, you use the word imaging--just think of that or conjure up a face, but I would like to have and I like to think of, scriptural phrases or psalms. The psalms have very consoling thoughts that can give

Cunningham: you a peace or a hope. Now, there are various themes, and you have at your spiritual library books, articles, pamphlets, on methods of prayer, and you are free within yourself to take any one of those that seem to give you the help, the peace, the composure, and the strength.

Just as one's psychological personality is different from somebody else's, so one's spiritual personality is different. For some it is the overt kind of thing that is utilized today in a charismatic movement (you have heard of that) where you physically open up--that is not my theme or my ability to participate in at all.

I am a very outgoing person--and you probably have gathered that--in normal, ordinary things, but in that which is deep within me, it's that phrase, "My secret is my own." I guess that was the way my early training was: you went to church, you prayed. You weren't praying out loud. You said the prayers at the Mass with the priest and so forth.

One aspect of today's modern spirituality is writing all your thoughts. I didn't do that even in ordinary things. For example, I have never kept a diary. It just isn't within me to do that myself, except when I traveled, and that was a different kind of thing, that was a keeping of little memoirs of where I had been. There are those who take the method of a journal as a whole school of thinking today, that if you write all of your thoughts and so forth and then go back and read them at a certain day that you--I can't get into that at all. I wouldn't even want to try to. I know that it is opposed to the way I would be--with personally me. I can't change that much.

It is a way for many people, but for me it is more with a scriptural passage, and just a quiet calmness either in my room or outside. I love the water so much because I think there is something--I don't know how to explain that, but of all the natural things that I love, where to be, I like to be by an ocean, by a lake, or the mountains. That is why I like Tahoe so much. And I like the seashore down by Carmel, because you have hills and water. I don't like just flat land. I don't think I could ever live in Texas or any of those places. Now, I know it sounds strange that I think it would oppress me, but even the number of times I have passed over it, it just has been difficult to envision how people live there if they have to. I would find it very hard. I don't psycho-analyze myself, but that is the way I feel.

Riess: At the ocean you have arrived at a really important edge.

Cunningham: Yes, but you could be planning going, too! [laughs] I was thinking of what's on the other side, both of the world and the world to come.

Riess: Is there any expectation on the part of the college that you will represent a kind of model spiritual leader?

Cunningham: Oh, no, no, those things are very personal. As a college president and as a sister of Notre Dame, I try to evidence the spirit of St. Julie. Her own warmth and her own openness and her spirit of simplicity and chairty and love for others is what we try to emulate. All of the sisters would do that, but not in any sense of a role model. Whoever comes into jobs are not told they are to model themselves after anybody but to be the best they can be themselves.

When I was the community superior, of course, I had to give conferences to the sisters and draw upon my own background to do that, but that type of direction in the spiritual life has changed, so we don't do it that way any more.

Religious Life Today--Immaculate Heart College##

Riess: For someone who chooses the religious life when they have graduated from high school--

Cunningham: We really don't accept candidates from high school now. They would have had at least part of a college education. That was one of the changes and, again, it isn't exactly written, it is something understood. From the point of view of accepting candidates--and, of course, candidates are much fewer, as you probably realize, in all communities--for the most part if a young girl spoke to one of the sisters and said that she wanted to become one of the sisters ultimately, she would be encouraged to become perhaps an affiliate, which is merely a person who is thinking about, and interested in the work of the sisters of Notre Dame, and yet cannot be accepted until someone on the provincial team feels that she has sufficient maturity academically, or professionally within a framework. Supposing it was a nurse who wanted to--although we are not a nursing order, we have some nurses in the congregation--then no longer does that person go to any one definite place for her early training. She may be sent, or asked, or told she is going to be in one certain community to learn the work.

Cunningham: We have some who are living in a secondary house, as we call it. Not at Saratoga. We don't have a novitiate per se any more. That's a house for beginning candidates, which was originally in San Jose, then it was transferred to Belmont, and then moved to Saratoga. Now, the provincial house has stayed there. But no longer does any candidate have to go to Saratoga and live there. That young woman, or an older woman as the case might be, would live in any one of the communities of the province where she would feel she would know one of the sisters involved in a particular work she was interested in. She would get her direction and training and she would go, of course, through a canonical period of the Church before she would be allowed to make her vows of staying for one year or for whatever number of years, until she made final vows. But there is not one place that a person has to go any more in the beginning of her training.

Riess: But then with that you do offer a free college education?

Cunningham: We expect that they come in with their education. Maturity is important, no matter what their work is going to be. I don't think we have anybody now that has not had at least a major part of a college degree, and for many years that was the exception.

Riess: Then once they are in the order?

Cunningham: Then they can go on to graduate work.

Riess: The province will support them.

Cunningham: There is an education committee in the province, with members appointed and elected. They study the qualifications of the younger sisters. We have several now out studying for doctoral work here and there. Then even after the highest degree that that person is suited to attain, she may want postgraduate work, workshops, summer programs, and those have to go through the education committee. They review that and then the budget committee of the province sees what it can give. Maybe everybody the same summer can't go away to the East to some workshop. There has to be some kind of equality, a taking of turns. But there is always ongoing education for the sisters, taken care of by the province.

Riess: This raises a question about the connection between a strong order and a strong college, and about Immaculate Heart.

Cunningham: Our institution is the development from a very strong international congregation. Our congregation has always had as its primary purpose education, and since we began in Europe and have come across the waters and gone all over the world, that work

Cunningham: has continued. Colleges, teacher training colleges in Europe, wherever we are in the United States, in the Orient, in Japan--the institutions that we have, the collegiate institutions, all have flourished.

In the English situation, the educational program is entirely different. The colleges have had to change according to the organization of the British school system and that is quite different from here. There has been collaboration with one, two, or three institutions where one of ours would mingle with two others and form one school of education where there were three before, but that is a different system.

So the burden of our work has been in education, the burden of our training. Now, the term education today is widely conceived. There can be all kinds of work in education, as you know. But because we are an international order, there is much more of a strength, I suppose, than with an order that is just within a certain area.

You mentioned the Immaculate Heart in Los Angeles. Now, that order--and I, of course, have again been an observer on the periphery--but as far as I understand, they were an order that was formed from another group and set up more or less as a congregation in the archdiocese of Los Angeles. I cannot really comment validly on their order because I don't know the whole history of their order, but I do know that their mother house and their top educational institutions and their primary work center was in Los Angeles itself, although they were in parish schools elsewhere.

They drew to their order many, many fine women. Some of our own sisters attended Immaculate Heart College in the sixties, maybe in the fifties and sixties. They had a marvelous program down there. Some of our sisters went to Immaculate Heart High School and ultimately entered Notre Dame. So we knew them from that point of view. I personally knew the sisters only from college and university conventions and that sort of thing, or meetings with them, and found them always very, very warm and friendly and outgoing. We had very fine relationships with them.

That's why, when their problems came, and the problem was with the order and then ultimately with the college, it was very sad for many of us who knew them and knew their concerns and knew what wonderful women they were. We knew many of them personally. Somebody from New York may not have known them, but those of us in California and within a few hundred miles certainly knew them and felt very sorry. It's hard, even though they were so close, to know everything; probably the sisters themselves didn't really know all of it.

Cunningham: All we can say is that they were probably ahead of their time in the Church as far as religious life was concerned. They were under the authority of the cardinal in their area. We are not in that sense under the archdiocese. Notre Dame is international; that's the difference. Their problems, even though it was one institution and one congregation there, were much more acute because they had only themselves to represent themselves, where the archdiocese had itself. I guess it was just two strong bodies and unfortunately maybe the personalities of the people involved were not able to accede.

There were almost two extremes, as far as I could understand it, where the sisters felt in the light of what they saw coming in the sister-formation program that I mentioned--and they were very active in it--in the light of what the Church was saying and had said at the Ecumenical Council, and in the light of what they saw developing in religious life nationally and internationally, they--very highly educated women, very well-meaning women--wanted to go forward with their congregation as they saw it. On the other hand, you had the authority of the archdiocese, as far as I can understand this now, in which that authority did not want that congregation to be as liberal as it was planning to be and, unfortunately, there seemed to be no negotiating possible, for whatever reason.

Riess: So what they did was withdraw financial support?

Cunningham: I am not so sure it was the financial support, because the sisters were making it. I don't think the archdiocese supported them financially. Remember, I am talking as an outsider.

Riess: I brought this up to talk about the differences, and you have explained how administratively you are really different, but still the sixties question of taking the quantum leap, as you say--

Cunningham: Yes, that's it. There were sisters, religious, across the country, across international lines, who felt that since the Church was opening up so much, then there should be immediacy in how religious life was going to make changes. On the other hand, there were those who felt changes certainly were going to come, changes were needed. And then within that group there were those who felt, well, not too many changes were needed [laughs] and not too soon, and then the others, there were going to be many, but maybe we should wait.

When you are in an international situation, just the situation itself makes it necessary for communication, for meetings, to take a longer time, even though individuals within the group,

Cunningham: those who were for the immediacy of a quantum leap were causing concerns across the international scene. Yet nothing could be done really officially because you had to have international meetings and so forth.

Now, with a smaller institution that is only in one area--

Riess: There is no restraining.

Cunningham: No, it is just there. There they are. Now, it is true that if you are going to have an organization that is accepted by the Church as an official organization, it has to have a stamp of approval. So the changes that were to be made according to the constitutions of the institution would have to be finally approved, whether it is a renovation of those rules and regulations that already have the stamp of approval of the Church, whether there would be modifications, but committees back in Rome were going to have to review them. Now, the committees were going to be made up primarily at that time, of course, I presume, of all of the men who were on the boards. Today they, of course, have been added to and expanded to include the women religious.

But it certainly was better for the international congregations, it was easier in a sense, although perhaps frustrating for individuals. Now, with another order they could perhaps try to do it much faster, and perhaps in taking that quantum leap, kind of fall down in the chasm, because the restraints were put aside. That was where the differences of personality cause the problems that I know have been heartbreaking really for the communities themselves, for the ultimate decision about what to do with the college.

Riess: Yes, it is touching to think about.

Cunningham: Yes, it is because there was a very, very fine educational program there, there were outstanding faculty members, there were promises of very good funding for the program. But once the whole mission of the institution seemed to change, then there were those on the outside who had a different view--I don't know if you call it broader or narrow--a different view and felt that there should have been more time and they could not go along with it, and so the college was simply not able to continue, and that was unfortunate for Immaculate Heart. Even though we were going through, at the same time, the problems of facing the fact that we were going to have to make changes, it wasn't affecting the college administration.

Cunningham: In fact, during our centennial, one of the things that we brought out at the very press meeting we held in early '66 concerned the changes of the religious [garb]--and I have photographs that show us some in the older habits, some in the modified, and some as contemporary as they were at that time, albeit with veils. Right then and there we were showing that these were some of the changes we were considering making, and we had pictures to show it. We weren't saying we were going to make a big change immediately.

Riess: It is interesting that you did that. I think that the danger is that the media gets too focussed on the superficial aspects of it.

Cunningham: Oh, they did, of course.

It was interesting when we did that. We had this big press day and we showed them what we were going to do, what we were planning to show in our facilities. We presented a huge master plan with the little buildings that illustrated what we were hoping to do. And then we took the press here in the gardens, and had the sisters pose as to the various kinds of clothes. So it was a combination. Of course, those were both externals; buildings are external to education and clothes are external to the person. But again it was within the time line and the frame of what was happening in those days.

Riess: You feel that it was handled sympathetically and intelligently, the change in garb and all of that?

Cunningham: Yes, from our point of view. Now, in the beginning there were many who felt, and it's probably true, that there was too much concern across the world about attire. For many that is still the case. There can be both sides, that the clothes don't make the man and they don't necessarily show the Church. But there is still for most of us the idea that there should be some sign. Although when people go to national meetings today of religious congregations, there are many that are still--all you have to do is look at the recent pictures of the Pope in Spain surrounded by hordes of religious, all in what seems certainly to be a traditional garb. Now, they may be changes from what they wore originally, I don't know.

There are parts of the world that are still technically Catholic countries--technically by name and yet perhaps not by practice, as the magazines in the media are pointing out from the statistical point of view. Yet here in America, so many of us have gone into the contemporary clothes. It created a considerable commotion in the beginning, and yet there is much less

Cunningham: fuss about it now, although many of us still try to be more conservative in our public appearances, in our garb, to be sure people know who we are and what we are, what we represent.

Riess: I am sure that you could debate that for a long, long time. It is a very interesting thing because you are really talking about values and perceptions.

The College Chapel

Riess: I have done some recent reading on liturgical arts, and I am interested in your choices of liturgical items for the chapel. The chapel is the place on this campus where you are showing your art and your beauty in a way that is special.

Cunningham: That is representing the college.

Riess: I wondered, when that was being designed, how much care and thought and expense was devoted to that chance to really do something lasting.

Cunningham: When we knew that we had an initial gift that was going to make it possible for us to build a chapel--which we needed badly because we were still in the ballroom "temporarily" since 1923--then we wanted it to be in a central place on the campus and we wanted all to participate in its development. We used the same architect whom we had for some of the other buildings with whom I had had occasion to work, Vincent Raney. I know the present design is the seventh of those that he presented to us that we finally accepted. In other words, we didn't take the first one. We didn't say, yes, yes; we thought it through.

We wanted it to hold about five hundred, which it does. We wanted it to be light. I don't like the oppression of Gothic structures in today's world on today's campus. So we wanted something that did not have a lot of arches and that sort of design, just clear and clean in that sense, and light. Our group that talked about it agreed and liked what we were planning.

Then the art department because vitally concerned, because at that time the chairman of our art department was a sister, Sister Margaret Mary, who is very interested in the liturgical movement. Also we had another sister who wasn't in the art department but was very creative in art, Sister Marie Therese O'Brien.

Riess: In the chemistry department.

Cunningham: Yes, we had two sister-artists in two different departments who were helpful in the planning of the decor and the beauty of the chapel itself.

Then I personally brought on a liturgical art group--I haven't the name at hand right now--for the statues and the vestments and so forth. I took that area as my particular task.

Riess: What do you mean, a liturgical art group?

Cunningham: A company that I liked, which I had seen in New York, an international group who had done work in Europe, the vestments and the vessels that are used in the Mass and so forth. I chose a company whose work I saw that was doing very modern things then to design those things that were used in the chapel on the altar itself, other than things that were permanent. The windows were going to be permanent.

In thinking about what kind of windows, of course we wanted glass windows. One of the styles was shown locally to me, and I went to Seattle and I went to Arizona to see some of them in place. They were the Gabriel Loire windows, out of Chartres, France, which utilized sculptured glass rather than a flat colored glass. So I found the representative in America who, interestingly enough, happened to live next door in San Carlos! He himself was French and he was a representative in the United States for the Loire studio.

The planning of the windows was an all-campus kind of involvement on what would be the theme, and how we were going to work out the theme of windows. Vincent Raney, the architect, had drawn the windows just as you see them today, but without anything in them. In the study of the windows, we finally decided that we would like above all the Loire type of window. It was going to be a pretty involved kind of negotiation, in French, too, from Belmont to Chartres and back again. What would be the theme? We chose the theme of woman. Now, if you remember, in this time, because this was in the early sixties, we were still a woman's college. Now, it would seem we were being very "womanish" [laughs] in doing it today. That's fine and, of course, it is true, we still can be quite valid in the fact that that's part of our history and it is in the history of the church and this church is dedicated to Our Lady of Notre Dame.

Cunningham: Sister Margaret Mary worked on biblical themes from scriptures that could be visualized, and presented these quotations to us, and we studied them. She did not present a design at all, but she could see that an artist, being an artist herself, could do this, and it would be a scene representing Mary in scripture all around the chapel, and the scriptural quotation that the artist could use as his taking off spot for its development. We were having to do all of the communication with somebody in France through a bilingual Frenchman, so we needed to have a pretty good understanding of what we were going to do.

Mr. Raney had no objection, of course, to what we were going to do with the chapel, and he certainly approved of that. Everybody felt it was marvelous, as long as I felt I could get the money. So we sent the ideas in the scriptural passages to Loire, who had to translate those into a design to fit the window.

He sent the drawings back months later. They came on black sheets with the colors and the designs, and then we reviewed them. I remember we opened them up on the dining room table down here in Ralston Hall, with all of the sisters, and they were there for everybody to see what Loire had designed for the windows. We were ecstatic! There were two minor changes. I wanted one window for St. Julie, because she represented us, and that was the only window that was not scripture per se, and the habit was wrong--it is nonsensical when you think of it now because we don't even wear that same habit--but I tried to correct it.

Then, in another one, where Martha was serving--we wanted to show something of service--Martha had a broom, and I didn't like the idea of this old funny witchy-type broom up in the chapel window, and I said, "No, she can serve by holding a tray." Those are the only artistic changes.

From the technical point of view it was a triumph. When those eight hundred odd pieces of sculptured glass within their miniature frames came to be installed, there wasn't one iota of deviation for insertion. The special contractor we got to install that didn't have to chip off the glass or the frame or knock out the concrete.

The statues, like the pictures, all of those were submitted to our whole college group. The Stations of the Cross which Sister Marie Therese designed--[she] worked right up in the chemistry studio and everybody had a chance to see the artist work. We used the theme of hands, which would be less controversial than a face that could have had a stark design in it, for the manner in which she was going to do it, in sculptured mosaic, was rather angular.

Cunningham: Then came the theme of the background of the chapel itself where the cross would be; it was planned to have a cross of mosaic. So we had absolutely everybody on the campus on the day that the cross was going to be inserted in its frame, then flat on the ground. When the contractor and the architects were ready, everybody in the community came, from the workmen on the college campus who did anything there, the children from the lowest school all through the college, they came in a procession and everybody put one of the stones in that cross that is up there today.

The statues we chose to be noncolored, but light wood. It was the simplicity that we wanted.

Riess: I have been to it and it's a wonderful place. In fact, I would like to go again now at noon to see what the light is like.

I wondered why you didn't choose the liturgical objects, the vessels from among San Francisco artists. The liturgical art movement was well developed in San Francisco.

Cunningham: We looked at everything that was presented, and the particular company that I chose was actually a company that was in New York. I spent a lot of time looking at companies where you could have them design something for you specially, because our statues are designed for us. They were based on something I had seen a photograph of, but then there were several modifications. If anybody in San Francisco had had such a presentation, we would have seen it and liked it.

The Centennial--Drawing on all the Contacts

[Interview 7: November 19, 1982]##

Riess: Did you get any outright gifts to prepare for the centennial?

Cunningham: No, we had to use our own money. We didn't have any seed money for that, really. We just took our own money and used it for the experts that we needed and for the publicity and the publications and that sort of thing. We set aside a budget for that. At this point, I don't remember how much it was, but we didn't get any challenge gifts. We really wanted to put the pressure on giving for the centennial itself, and the things that we would need following that for the development of the master plan, and all of the things that were coming along for the college in the future.

Riess: The centennial really is a fund raising program essentially.

Cunningham: Yes, and a getting-to-know-you kind of thing for the community at large. It is amazing when you have people say, "Oh, I didn't know the college was here." The way we are located, you can pass by and see what is the high school, but you don't see the college proper unless you come in the main driveway or up the hill. So we had to bring people on the campus, not just give them paper material about it, but to bring them here to see what actually was going on.

Riess: Yet those were not the people you expected to receive gifts from.

Cunningham: That's right, yes, we weren't appealing to the community in that sense of having a Belmont fund drive.

It really was a dual thing, to get our friends and those who would be able to give us funds, and then to get the community to know us and know that we were here and not just a--

Riess: Not just a what? What do you think they might have thought you were?

Cunningham: --just a secluded spot without any real activity, academic activity and breadth of program and so forth.

Riess: Yet you had your evening program.

Cunningham: Yes, we had, but again what do you see in the evening? People who came here knew it and they spread the word and the evening school grew, but it still was important that we become known as a very important academic institution in the area.

I didn't bring you any of the publicity, newspaper clippings and all that, but we had editorials in the various papers that were commending and commenting on us and when you get the editorial section to turn over a part for you as you celebrate your centennial, that's important. That even brings us to people who maybe don't get on the campus, but they recognize [the school] if they see the local metropolitan newspaper and others honoring the college for what we have done over the hundred years, and what we were planning to do for the future.

Riess: Did you get good coverage from San Francisco papers?

Cunningham: Yes. Of course, we would have loved to have had all kinds of front page coverage, but that's a "consummation devoutly to be wished for." We got several very good articles, and in the San Jose papers too. So there was a breadth to the fifty-mile area from San Jose to San Francisco.

Riess: Someone like Mrs. Marshall Madison should be able to command space in the San Francisco papers.

Cunningham: We did have some very good coverage, we really did, for the events that we were having here, but again you never get, I suppose, as much as you want no matter how much you do get. [laughs] But we were pleased. We had very good direction in planning the program, in setting it up, and in keeping it on target.

Riess: That was probably you who managed all of that I would think.

Cunningham: I had the committee with me, of course, and I had a wonderful administrative assistant, Eleanor [Mrs. Ernest] Heinen. Oh, she was wonderful. We worked so well together and she was such a marvelous organizer herself. The two of us were enjoying working together and keeping the centennial on the go.

Riess: Eleanor Heinen was the centennial coordinator. And Sister Helen Benedict was also on your committee.

Cunningham: She was the provincial superior at the time and had been the dean of students here at the college. From the point of view of the sisters and the college and then the students with whom she had worked for many years, that was an important connection, too. She gave the support of the community in that sense, the province community.

Riess: Then Philip FitzGerald and Mrs. FitzGerald.

Cunningham: Yes, Phil and Hortense were just wonderful in assuming so much of the responsibility for their time, as well as pledges, of course. They had been supporters of the college for a good number of years preceding that, and enjoyed working with this kind of a project because they believed in the college. Phil gave me every support for the planning that we did, attended the meetings with me, went down to see prospects. We went down to Santa Barbara together for a visit to Mr. [Thomas] Storke to get some funds.

Hortense was very specially interested in Ralston Hall. One of the things that we were working toward was the dedication of Ralston Hall as a national historic landmark, which had been accomplished, and then headed in the seventies toward the California state landmark. So that was a tie-in also with the whole centennial.

Riess: There were an amazing number of things that you managed to--

Cunningham: Oh, yes! We pulled out all the stops that we could possibly do legitimately.

Cunningham: Mr. Carr, Jim [Regent James K.] Carr, who had been in the Kennedy administration, was then in San Francisco. (He was also on the Santa Clara board.) Since his girls had gone here to college, he was very interested in working with us. He thought we should have a Washington connection. Even though, perhaps, he couldn't come to the meetings all of the time, there was "our man in Washington." Ed McDermott was the regent from Washington, D.C., an attorney who worked with Mr. Carr in the building of the airport, as an attorney, as a guide in some sense. He was with a very prestigious firm in Washington. We were trying to get a national face, as far as we could.

Riess: Was Mr. McDermott able to do anything for you specifically?

Cunningham: He and Mr. Carr worked with Estelle Ramey, who was very prominent on the status of women, a very marvelous scientist and warm human being, to be one of our honorary fellows. I had an opportunity to meet her and to go to her home for dinner when I was in Washington on one occasion.

It was bringing us into contact. We also had Norman Cousins and the New York connection in a sense, his marvelous interest in us, and then a touch of Washington which was kind of a carry-over from the Kennedy connection that Mr. Jim Carr had had. He had been very lovely to me on an occasion when I was in Washington and had visited there, even before the centennial, when he was undersecretary of the interior. So it was a kind of being in the shadow of Washington, which was rather nice. Of course, one of our colleges is there, Trinity College, too, which gave people a connection that a sister college of Trinity was celebrating in California.

Riess: Did you ever use any of these people to engineer getting loans?

Cunningham: Not any of those people. We were beginning, of course, at that time, to think of a library which was to come in the seventies, but we worked through a firm here, Keil and Connolly, the attorneys who had helped through the government agency here in San Francisco. Then our congressman always gives himself credit for getting the loan.

Riess: Who was your congressman, do you remember?

Cunningham: Yes, J. Arthur Younger.

Remember, we had begun back in the fifties when we had the loan for St. Joseph Hall. Then when we added to the dining room, and later put up the apartments, we also had that connection. When we were going to go ahead for the library, we had the three-

Cunningham: fold connection there in Washington to give us a look-see that things were going ahead. But really, I think the firm here, Keil and Connolly, who handled the bond from the point of view of the legal end, were the ones who had to keep their finger on the Washington and San Francisco connections, really.

Riess: Did you have direct contact with J. Arthur Younger?

Cunningham: Yes. Your congressman and your representative, when there is something that is coming within their districts, want to be on top when they know that it is going to be something that a lot of people will share. We were not a big institution, but even so, the only four-year college in San Mateo County was something that was important for them to have a part in. Now, naturally we knew they weren't sitting in Washington doing nothing but looking at our loan funds. They sent that work down to one of their secretaries, but it was our work to keep on top of it. Of course, we did not have any problems there.

Riess: Despite these wealthy and powerful friends did you ever feel that there was a chance that the college could go under?

Cunningham: I don't think in those years that I really thought about going under because, as I mentioned earlier, I never wanted to be responsible for doing anything major for which we didn't have the funds, and I was so sure from all of the good people that we had working with us that these funds would come through. Concerning everything that we put down in our master plan, I couldn't be sure of all that. But then we wouldn't have built any of those buildings that were suggested for the future, at least in my administration, if we didn't have the money; I knew we were going to get the money for the apartments, which were built in the late sixties, and while that construction was being completed, we had to enlarge the dining room, and that was going along well.

The library, I was sure, would be going ahead because there was to be some government assistance for that and, therefore, I was certain that we would get enough support from our alumni and from our friends here for the rest of the amount. I was just convinced of that. I would never plan, nor sign a contract for it until we got all the funds. Of course, when you are working with the government, they give you a date by which you are supposed to have plans and funds ready once you go to bid.

As for those other areas and projects that we were projecting for which we did not have immediate plans, that was our wish list, and our hope and direction list; nothing would be settled for any building until there was something more substantial than the wish and the hope. I knew that, but you have to show people what

Cunningham: you are wishing and hoping for, and why you are wanting to do it, the educational advantages there would be toward the development of the various and sundry buildings. Of course, as in the case of many master plans, the dates had to be changed as circumstances changed the situation.

Riess: The faculty residence is underway right now.

Cunningham: That's right. It was delayed in the beginning because there was a question that possibly some of the provincial building that they were hoping for at a time might come to Belmont on the campus--for example, a residence for the young sisters as well as for the faculty. But as the sixties developed, we saw that that was not going to be possible, that it was better for everything to remain in Saratoga. So only one portion of that element of the building out there in Saratoga was completed. And then we had to change from what would have been a combined project perhaps with the faculty residence and a provincial-designated area on this campus, and scrap that idea, and concentrate on the library and begin, of course, the faculty residences which are now in a semi-completed stage. So again you have to change. Then we had remodeling that had to be done as we went from one building to another and that wasn't always incorporated in detail in the projections. So we modified our plans.

Riess: In the Phase II, you projected an administration building, a fine arts building, a student residence, a recreation center, a dining hall, a student center.

Cunningham: Those, of course, were part of the original master plan as we had projected it at that time, but when the library was completed and we were able to use then that area that had been vacated, we modified. Rather than going into a huge building plan, we went into a remodeling plan which gave the area of student services and a student union and an exhibit hall for public exhibits of our art department. We were also able to do a renovation of the Little Theater. Now, these were renovations rather than a big production.

Riess: So none of those things that I listed turned into new buildings?

Cunningham: At that time, no. They turned into a modification of the buildings that were vacated, including a carriage house. And what had been the ranch house became a small science building. We have modified that again into a classroom building this past summer. So that is what you have to be able to do, swing from one plan to another.

The Futures Committee

Cunningham: Another thing that came into being from our Governance Board was the futures committee. On our board, the new members who had reviewed our master plan saw that we were already making modifications. Therefore, it was important that we study why we were making modifications and toward what we were doing that, so that we had better get down to specifics. What were we really going to do with what we said we were going to do? And why were we either not going to do it or why were we taking a new path?

Mr. Fuller Brawner was the chairman of the Governance Board's Futures Committee, and you will see that one of the important things there was a decision in reference to the ultimate number of students we should have.

Riess: When was this committee?

Cunningham: In '70. I am jumping a little ahead, but I am tying it in with why there was modification there and why we had this futures committee to review our plans. Just as you are talking to me now about why we didn't do it, or why we didn't do what we said, or how did we change, this was one of the things that we had utilized, our futures committee, to analyze specifically now, as we looked back over what we had accomplished as the result of the centennial drive and all the work that had been put into that, and as a result of the influx of students, whether it was pouring or trickling into various areas, and how we were going to handle that now. Again, this committee reviewed what we foresaw we could handle by way of increased tuition to bring in more funds, how the alumni was coming with its fund drives, and they tried to analyze those things that we really could put our finger on and say, "Yes, we can do this and can do it right away."

Riess: Did you get any professional help in those projections? I know that you have often turned to professional firms.

Cunningham: Not really. No, we did that as a more in-house analysis, based on a restudy of what we had used for the '67-'68 projection, and what trends there seemed to be now.

The admissions office played a large part in that because they were the ones who were out on the road all of the time seeing where our market was in the various areas of California. For awhile, we sent a representative recruiting East every year, but we gradually decided not to because we were getting just as many students from the East Coast as when we didn't send representatives, so we concentrated on the West Coast, particularly in the

Cunningham: Los Angeles area. We did that for the reason that there are many, many schools in the Los Angeles area. We know that people like to go away to school, and it isn't so far to go away when you can get back within a few hours. It seemed a wiser move to concentrate in that area, in the Hawaiian Islands, and in the Northwest.

Then, of course, there were beginning to be the trickles from the international student movement into private colleges. We had to make a decision as to what we were going to do for that extra residence that we had hoped to have. If you remember, the apartments had been geared supposedly for graduate students. So we decided we simply couldn't even let graduates in any more, that they would have to be the ones who would go off campus, and we would keep the approximately three hundred beds for undergraduates and let the graduate students go where they could find a place. We would try to help them. We would have an office, out of the student affairs office, that would give them help. The undergraduates, those who wanted to be in residence, wanted to be in a boarding situation, a residential situation in college.

Riess: If it were possible to keep everybody resident on campus, is that profitable?

Cunningham: Oh, I don't think we ever thought of that really, not everybody. We never thought that was important.

Riess: Is running the residences profitable here?

Cunningham: It was more in the beginning than now because all of the expenses with maintenance, preventive maintenance, food service, and all of the other subsidiary services for the residence students, their costs have escalated considerably, whereas we could not escalate the actual room and board as much as we might like to. We have kept it very, very nominal really. Many people would say that this is a rich student's place because it looks lovely and it is beautifully kept up, but it really isn't. We have had over sixty-five percent of the students on some form of individual or package student aid over the years. We made the decision that, no, we would not build another residence, we would simply change the format of who was going to live in residence.

That was also when the older students, older people, were beginning to think of returning to college. We began a concentration period in our division of continuing education for the returning student. First of all the returning woman, and then the men were returning to college, and those were all going to be commuting students, whether they were in the day division or the evening division.

Cunningham: We really had to have an analysis in reference to the space that we had. How many students could we actually manage? The futures committee had to make the decision on it, and it was approved by the board, that a maximum full-time equivalency of fifteen hundred students was what we were going to be able to do in physical facilities, renovating and so forth. Fifteen hundred would be the best maximum for what we were going to continue to try to do in the personalized kind of connection that the students had had on campus.

Certainly, we had land that would take more building, but that was going to take a great deal more money. As we saw the faculty residence was going to be a possibility, that would mean more small areas here in Ralston Hall for faculty offices. Again, it's a reusing of space and a readjusting of space toward the reallocation of students to where they could fit in. That is why we have been changing areas rather than putting up structures--not that we don't need a few more!

To think that we came out of it without a debt! I did not want to leave any debts in my administration except the government ones, and we accomplished that finally to my great satisfaction and brought the endowment up to over a million dollars, not just on paper, but in actual funds. That's not very much, but it was something to us.

Riess: How about the enrollment?

Cunningham: It was something like 1,487 a year ago and I think it's in the 1,420s or 30s right now. Eleven hundred and something full-time equivalency, so we still can take more commuting students. That was what we wanted. We have space options now.

Riess: Then you will be able to change your admissions standards.

Cunningham: We have been. They have been up there every year, including the standards for international students. We could take everybody who applied, but that isn't the academic record that we wanted to establish here.

It is true that in the earlier days we took foreign students for whom perhaps maybe a semester or perhaps even a year had to be almost--I hesitate to use the word, remedial, but I don't know what else to say, a coaching kind of thing. This we are not doing any more. We do give English as a second language; the students wherever they come from, have to be able to go right into class and take their notes and so forth, but they do have an option to take an English class to help them further their own basic knowledge.

Cunningham: If you want to be a well-known and well-thought-of institution, small though you may be, you have to keep up your standards. Certainly we could have added bodies, but then we wouldn't have been reaching the students' brains, and of course, that's the important thing in education.

Riess: How does the accreditation system motivate you? Do they expect more excellence each time, more academic excellence?

Cunningham: Oh, they expect you to upgrade yourself, of course. Each time, Western College Association gives you suggestions. It is not a forced kind of thing, unless one has severe problems and one's accreditation is in danger, which, of course, ours never has been. It is really an encouragement. They don't want you to fail any more than you want to fail yourself, but if you were on a borderline for a program here or there, or financially, if they saw that you were struggling very, very hard, they would give you suggestions and they would expect if they had given you a five-year reaccreditation, that you would have re-examined your situation.

Faculty Salaries##

Riess: In the master plan, for every dollar that was going into buildings about twenty cents was going into academic programs. That was faculty salaries?

Cunningham: Faculty salaries, of course, have always been a problem to us because you look at what you'd like to give and realize that it just isn't going to be possible to reach the A listing of the American Association of University Professors. Whenever we talk to the faculty, we explain to them that we never could meet the standards that we would like to meet in the amount of money. They are the first to protest if we raise our tuition because then they think they are going to have fewer students. While it hasn't always been easy for them, I would say that ninety-five percent of the faculty were very, very understanding--not that they haven't tried to get as much as they could possibly get and for that they simply can't be faulted. I don't think they ever felt we were putting too much in buildings, because they saw what we had to do. For the buildings, we got the money designated. For scholarship aid we got money for scholarships. But you don't go out and ask for money for faculty salaries. One time we did in the annual alumni fund drive and we got the least money that year.

Riess: That's interesting.

Cunningham: Exactly.

Riess: When you built into your master plan $787,000 in the first two-year period to go to academic, presumably you had the money in hand?

Cunningham: Oh, we did.

Riess: So did that mean there was a major upgrading in the--

Cunningham: Yes, in the faculty salaries. That was when we were able to give a very good boost in those years because we had tried to work toward that. Now, again, it was not in an A category. I don't know how we were listed. But the percentages gradually became higher and higher. That was a priority, yes, as was it a priority to give larger sums for the operation of the admissions office and the work of recruitment.

The art department and music have been long suffering for their own facilities. It would be ideal if what they had hoped for could have been done, but again it wasn't possible for those two. Yet we've done very well academically in both departments.

Riess: Do you mean their reputation has not suffered?

Cunningham: Yes, that is right, even though it is like Mark Hopkins on one end, and the students sitting on the other end of a log. [laughs] The music department sometimes is only on a piece of the log!

Riess: When you say the faculty "has tried" over the years, does that mean that you have had some real showdowns?

Cunningham: There have been, certainly, from the point of view of the concerns of the faculty, as faculty apart from the administration, times when they have met and they have talked about it. We told them, we had a faculty committee from the budget and finance committee who were supposed to bring to me--to us--what they thought was really possible. Of course, the faculty projected what they hoped might be accomplished; yet I am sure in the back of their mind they knew, unless there was some money coming that I hadn't told them about, which there was not, really, that the top amount they wanted could not be attained. But we really worked with the faculty, and we are still doing that, to bring them to work in analyzing projections from the figures that we were able to give them.

Cunningham: Now, I think there is always the problem, that a faculty does not have--and cannot have, you never expect them to have--all of the insight the controller and the business people have for what that whole dollar has to go for. They can't have the whole dollar. They would like even half of it. Again, that isn't possible when you think of the other things.

We tried to be open with them. Even the time we had to put a freeze on the salaries, if we were able, and saw that the number of students would help toward that extra amount in the dollar by November, we said we would then unfreeze the scale and give them the differential, which we did. I think they realize that we have tried to do it. I don't suppose they were always happy that we couldn't give them the one hundred percent that they wanted, but it has gone up to be a respectable amount.

Riess: Have you negotiated their teaching load?

Cunningham: Yes, I would say that has been a part of it. Whereas for many of them it was really fifteen units that was the normal, we have gone to twelve and of the twelve, if the person or faculty member was also a chairman, three units of that was allowed for the chairmanship of the position. So we have had a little bit of the give and take in that kind of thing, yes.

Riess: Can they take on other outside work?

Cunningham: We have not prohibited that, except that they would give the time to being on this campus that was expected of them. If they had other positions, the only thing we asked was that they would report to the dean where else they were working, if it were an academic institution, because some had done part-time work in another institution and we just wanted to know where those places were, and there has been no problem with that.

We also spent a great deal of time assessing and analyzing the faculty's fringe benefits so that we were able to increase there. Of course, that is important, what you do for their future, as well as for their medical and dental benefits and all that sort of thing.

Riess: Did you have some regent who was particularly versed on insurance and retirement?

Cunningham: We had a finance committee of the regents [who] worked with our insurance company and our insurance broker. The faculty committee for work on fringe benefits and that sort of thing worked with them also, so it was a triple board--the administration, the board, and the faculty. It was quadruple really; then you've got the

Cunningham: insurance people on the side to come in. We had the insurance reviewed and, of course, competitors come in. We've kept with the same insurance company. We changed some of the subsidiary companies that worked with them, but it has been a working together.

Riess: Do you have any faculty members who are professionals in other areas, in law or something like that, who are overpaid on this campus because of their outside job?

Cunningham: Oh, no, no. That has been a bone of contention here because we have been told in no uncertain terms by faculty in some of the divisions, specifically business and science, that at other institutions because what they could get on the outside would be so much more, that colleges and universities very often had given a different faculty rate, a different salary scale, for faculty in those subjects. To date, we have not done that. We have tried to keep our scale equitable, no matter what your division is.

Now, it's true that there is "time in grade" that would be given at initial placement on the faculty. That isn't exactly the same thing that you are saying; if somebody came on with more background than perhaps somebody who was already here, perhaps that amount of salary designated would seem more to anybody else looking at the salary scale, but then his or her professional background at becoming a faculty member warranted going up another step, not entirely out of step but perhaps another step on the faculty salary scale.

Riess: To go back to this interesting point that when you tried to raise funds from the alumni for salary, it didn't work, what did you conclude from that?

Cunningham: I felt that it was kind of a blow, in a sense, because I was naive enough to think that maybe the alumni would want the salaries of the faculty to be better, so that CND would continue to have the good faculty that we had. However, there was no threat from the faculty--I mean that if they didn't get what they asked, they would leave. It was nothing like that; it was simply that we designated salaries as the goal for the alumni drive for that particular year. We assumed, therefore, that there was interest far greater for scholarships for students, perhaps because alumni themselves had been assisted by scholarship aid.

We noted, strangely enough, that the alumnae were more alert to facilities and the needs of freshmen than the salaries that the faculty got, perhaps because they had never paid that

Cunningham: much attention to it, or it was never brought to their attention how much a faculty member was getting. Yet they knew how much they had paid as students, they knew how much the needs were today, they knew if we had that many more students that we would need x-number of square feet more in one facility or another. So they could see that, and that has been the trend.

Riess: Do you think it was some confusion about the fact that there was still that population of teaching sisters, that you weren't having to pay for them?

Cunningham: Perhaps it could have been. I don't think I ever thought about that angle, because we designated that this was for lay faculty salaries. I don't know whether any of them thought of that or not.

Then we have the faculty survey themselves. We would ask them to do that, to bring in their own hopes for where the salaries could go for the next year. One time they were concentrating on the lower levels of the salaries, the instructor and the assistant professor, rather than the higher faculty ranks, because they wanted to be able to get some younger faculty people in. That was an interesting thing that it was some of the middle faculty--not older, but some who had been there a longer time--who were encouraging that, who themselves would have profited more if they had concentrated on the higher salaries for the higher ranks, but they worked at that particular time and wanted it on the lower scale. The pendulum had swung to give those on the lower scale more, percentage-wise. Everybody has gotten a raise every single year, but the percentage of the total amount that we would add would be at one time more on the lower scale, the lower academic ranks.

Riess: How are you doing in keeping the salaries for men and women equal?

Cunningham: There has never been any differential whatsoever. I am always astounded when I read that men are still getting more--and you read it even today in the "Chronicle for Higher Education." Now, of course, we haven't the comparative numbers. To begin with, we had more women initially, so there was no question. We didn't try to attract men by saying, "You are going to get more if you come in here." There has never been one iota of bargaining that way. It was just an absolute dollar line, and sex didn't enter into it at all.

Riess: [laughter] You don't have <u>that</u> problem.

Honorary Fellows, and Friends of the College

Riess: The nomination of business and community leaders by that Centennial Steering Committee was interesting. Was the idea originally to have everyone nominate some ten to fifteen?

Cunningham: Yes, that was right.

Riess: Did that actually happen?

Cunningham: I think everybody gave some names. In fact, when I was pulling out those papers for you to review, I actually reread many of the carbons of the letters from these people. All of the letters are reorganized, as my wonderful assistant did it, into those who accepted a place on the centennial committee and those who didn't feel themselves able to take [it] on. I noted the reasons, as I read these letters with interest again after over a decade, and none of them disagreed with the value of what the drive was for, or the work, but some of them said, "I am sorry, I feel that I cannot have my name on anything that I cannot give a sizeable contribution to. So at this time, because I am on x-number of boards and whatever, I am sorry, I will have to say no." If people thought that they couldn't give, they just didn't want their name [included], which of course is a very honest way of putting it, too, although we didn't ask them for money. We were asking them to serve on the centennial committee. But being wise businessmen, they knew that probably they would be asked for some kind of contribution, and if they felt that for their service the name was not sufficient, which for some it was, then they did not want to be a part of it.

Riess: Did they ever then pull together to meet as a body?

Cunningham: No, we met with individuals, and I made it a point, especially with those who were in the area, to try to get in touch with them. Some, of course, I never met at all. I think the great Vince Lombardi's name is down there because one of our friends knew him very well. Actually I never saw him, but I wrote him, and all those who had accepted a place on the centennial committee.

Riess: So then what were they actually asked to do?

Cunningham: They were on all of our mailing lists for the events that were to take place. They were invited to participate in any way, shape, or form that they would enjoy--socially, academically, or culturally. Some simply would send a congratulatory note or telegram or something like that.

Riess: How were they approached for money, as I am sure they must have been at some point?

Cunningham: Very often Mr. FitzGerald would draft a letter, or we would work together on a letter. It would be for a particular project in our planning or for tickets for some event. [For] some events where they perhaps would not be able to come, many of them would send a gift over and above whatever the tickets were that we would send them.

Riess: Do you continue to use this list?

Cunningham: Subsequent to that? Of course, some of them have kept in close contact with us, yes, but not as a total committee, no. We worked with them really for about three years or two years anyway.

Riess: From this list, did you develop any new regents or people that you feel now that you can turn to for further gifts?

Cunningham: There are some of those, certainly, as I look over the list, I can see where they were a great help to us.

Riess: I think it would be nice to name the ones who were really great finds for you.

Cunningham: [tape interruption]

Norman Cousins, as you know, has been very important to us over the years. Bob Coyle, again who had been on the board, has kept [up] his association and his work with us. Mrs. Ralph K. Davies, whom we didn't know that well in the very beginning, has become a very good friend and supporter of the College of Notre Dame.

Riess: In fact, you made her an honorary fellow.

Cunningham: Yes, she became an honorary fellow.

Riess: As did Shirley Temple Black.

Cunningham: Yes, Shirley and Mrs. Davies and Norman Cousins.

Riess: And Estelle Ramey.

Cunningham: We did not give an honorary degree, because we do not have a Ph.D. program and, therefore, we did not feel that it was academically honest in a sense--and I am not disputing anybody else's right to do it, to give a major honorary degree, but we didn't have that program. We devised an honor that could come for reasons based on the guidelines that are on this sheet of paper here.

Cunningham: A committee of the board would choose candidates for whatever work they had done specifically in some of the areas of public service in higher education, the civic and community affairs, community and governmental concerns, ecological and environmental concerns of the day, cultural work, and international good will. These were the areas that we felt that there were people whom we knew whose background in any one or more of these fields was consistent with the mission of the College of Notre Dame and would enjoy being so honored that we would like to have them a part of this particular group. So that was how the setup of the Committee on Academic Honors worked out this plan for the election of honorary fellows. The board elected and then could write or contact the particular individual and ask if they would be so honored.

Riess: Then did they give speeches?

Cunningham: We devised a special hood for them that they can wear, the full hood similar to the size of the doctorate hood, but in our own designation the white velvet and the gold satin--gold and white are the colors of Notre Dame--and especially designed as different from our own regents' and trustees' hoods. And they received a citation. I have just one copy here. This is the kind of citation they received with the presentation that the college president made at commencement. Then they in turn gave an acceptance speech.

Now, you were asking about people who were helpful. Of course, you saw Mrs. FitzGerald's name. She has been a right hand in the development of my work in Ralston Hall. Then the Fromms [Mr. and Mrs. Norman] were very important to us from the point of view of music, and we became acquainted with Norman Fromm and that led to the development of a particular group on which he served here subsequently. He and his wife were important, too, in the development of our Ralston Concert Series and that came out as a result of our work in the centennial.

Riess: That has its own special sponsorship then.

Cunningham: Yes, it does, and those people have their own advisory board and they have their own honors that they give to somebody each year for an outstanding work in music, not in this particular geographic area but primarily in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Riess: The difference between Louise Davies and Norman Cousins as far as honorary fellows is that you might expect a gift from Louise Davies, but from Norman Cousins--

Cunningham: The gift is his great friendship. You couldn't attach money to anything like that, but he gave us a scholarship for a student. I think we have mentioned that before. Then last year when the Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham Chair was established, he was one of the contributors for that.

Riess: Then later Walter Gleason, Jane Fagan Olds, Wallace Stegner--

Cunningham: Wallace Stegner was the last one who was brought on. They did not have one last year.

Mr. Gleason has been a very generous contributor to the college, both through the foundations which he handles (they are private foundations) and through his own funds. He just happened to like what we were doing, and I enjoyed meeting him and I have been able to work very nicely with him and he has been a very generous benefactor, of course, to the college.

As you saw there also, Mrs. Madison has continued to this very day. Just the other day we got a gift of $20,000 from her personally, as well as her interest in a couple of foundations on which she happens to be a board member. So there were many from the list who helped us not only directly but also indirectly. There are others that we hoped might. Some of them haven't been able [to], or for one reason or another haven't. You will even notice that Governor Ronald Reagan was on this board at the time, but that doesn't mean we had anything but the use of his name to give us support, which of course is important. If you have the governor of the state sending a letter of congratulations, it makes a great deal of difference. We had letters from some of the fine academicians and presidents of our colleges in the area, and that was important. You will see Dr. Lawrence Ryan's name here. He is one of the top scholars at Stanford and he is going to be the first scholar for the Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham Chair in the spring. He is coming here as a guest professor for this coming year under that title.

Riess: Is that a chair in a particular field?

Cunningham: No, it may be in any field. This first assignment is going to be in the English department. Of course, that's Dr. Ryan's forte.

So there have been important connections with a good number of these centennial committee members in one way or another, and not always in the financial. When you look down the names, Thomas M. Storke, Senator Storke, he held the senatorial capacity for California very briefly but always kept the title. His mother had been a student in old San Jose, and he was almost

Cunningham: ninety when Mr. FitzGerald and I went down to Santa Barbara. He gave us several contributions for the college. If we hadn't encouraged him to be a part of the work that we were doing here how would he even know about us?

Riess: How close did you actually get to the financial goal in the three phases?

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Cunningham: We were able to do most of the renovations with the funds that perhaps originally we had thought might be for new structures. For the students' scholarship program we have been able to raise much more than I think we had even projected there because that has been important, to keep up that aid. We raised it for the renovations and we raised it for the building of the faculty residences that are going up and that, of course, is through the wonderful generosity of Harold and Edythe Donovan Toso. Both his position as an early advisory board member and an Honorary Fellow of CND and hers as a member of the alumni association and a past president are very important and precious to us. The library was completely paid for and all of the furnishings, of course. For that we only got from the government one-third of the cost--about $250,000. The rest we ourselves had to raise from alumni, friends, and benefactors.

We still have a need for an athletic building of some sort, a general recreation, gymnasium kind of thing. That has not been accomplished. We don't even have a nickel for it yet, and it is something that I know that we have to work on. But when we get something like the problem connected with the Ralston Carriage House, where immediately we have to raise a half a million dollars for this year, there goes our plan for putting another half a million in the other fund. So we have had to be very pliable, very elastic.

Riess: How about the landscaping? The master plan said that the place was basically barren on the upper levels.

Cunningham: That's true, and we have done a great deal about that. If you had seen it before, the landscaping was really only from the back of JB Hall. So when we did the library, we had to do that whole [area], and the position of the library was changed from where we had originally hoped it would be or planned. I don't say that there is anything wrong with it. It is just that we felt that it was better to move it up and put the parking out on the upper level, so all of the area in between had to be landscaped as far as the chapel and then down the hillside. You hadn't seen it before, but it used to be just wild fields out there.

Cunningham: Of course, doing anything in building up the hill, as we had to to extend that parking area out there, has taken a great deal of money, even doing the parking over in the lower area of Ralston Hall, which we didn't have before. All of those things have taken a lot of money and they have all been paid for. I keep saying that, but that's a miracle in itself.

The Honor System and the Image

Riess: In the seventies I see in the catalog that there is an honor system.

Cunningham: The students had an honor system from the very beginning. They took a pledge as freshmen. They got a class pin or a college pin and then they took the pledge to accept the honor system and so forth, and they were brought into the student body. That was a very formal kind of thing many years ago. Then, if you remember, Stanford University had an honor system, some kind of a pledge, I believe, that the students took. Whether the faculty went in or out of the classrooms at Stanford, of course I don't know.

With the college here, I think for awhile for some it was a matter of choice, because many faculty have been brought up within their own teachings to be present when a test was given. I know there is no pledge today. I think the freshmen are spoken to [about this] in freshman orientation, and you hope that that is going to be something that they realize is a part of the value system that we try to inculcate, that they will remember that. Whether they do or not, of course, is now up to them.

Riess: In 1977-78 it says that "we now have an honor system." You don't know why then?

Cunningham: I am not sure, but we were getting a great number of international students, and for some areas of cultural background there is such a pressure on not losing face that students from some various cultures would do anything not to lose face and, therefore, there was a cheating problem it seemed that had to be taken care of. I know that there has had to be--what do you call it?--a board set up for a review of those for whom there has been such cheating problems. That is still in effect, and students have been dismissed, I know that, if they have been found guilty, not just by their peers but from a review board now with a legal analysis of the situation. We even have had a lawsuit filed against us, and I am sure that's common today. We have had one, and the suit ultimately was dropped against the college; we were

Cunningham: sued for not allowing a student to continue in a graduate program because the student had been proven--but not admitted it, of course--guilty of an outrageous kind of cheating.

Riess: Another thing that I noticed in those years was an accelerated three-year B.A. That began in the seventies. I wondered why you would offer that. It is disadvantageous to you financially.

Cunningham: Yes, but it is advantageous to the students who need to go out and begin their career or begin their graduate work. We have tried to keep abreast of the times, and for many students elsewhere we found that the traditional four-year degree program was not keeping to the norm. The academic committees on the campus had to see whether that would be acceptable; rather than going through freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior year as such, one would just go through by number of units. We would allow that as long as everything was legitimized academically, of course. Now, students didn't have to take everything here at CND. Certain courses had to be taken here on the campus and in a specific sequence. But they could be taken within a compressed period of time, which I think many people are hoping to do.

Of course, that followed through with what we were doing with the opportunities for high school students.

Riess: Yes, the advanced placement.

Cunningham: Yes, and so we did it allowing for our Belmont high school students to come up and take college courses even before they had a high school diploma, and some of those students in a couple of instances are graduating from high school with a two-year, AA degree, in college. We did it on all levels there, and we were allowing our students individually in the elementary schools, of course, to go ahead at their own pace.

Riess: So you weren't worried though about losing your identity as a four-year liberal arts college?

Cunningham: No, because really technically the four years are there. That's just the normal way of saying it, but the degree can be granted in a lesser time if the student so wishes and so completes the requirements.

Riess: My own personal fascination with looking at the bulletins over the years includes noticing how the logo changes, going from the very Latinate thing to the very modern.

Cunningham: Actually, the official seal is in Latin. This is the official college crest as you see it here on this diploma.

Our logo and our crest are two different things, and that CND monogram that you can look at either way is again just a modernization for eye-catching use. The logo that we used for the centennial is again different. But initially it's true that it was mostly the ora et labora with the Notre Dame crest as you see here. In the earlier days, of course, there wasn't one for Belmont. That crest was only designed in 1922. The original one is the international Notre Dame crest, and a copy of that, as well as the college crest, is in mosaic right outside the Memorial Chapel.

Riess: When we were talking about art on campus last time you said something about a Bufano statue and then off went the tape. Did Bufano donate it?

Cunningham: Yes, he did, through the Bufano Society. The chairman of the art department at that time was Sister Margaret Mary Hoffman. She was, and is, a very talented artist herself, very interested in all of the things that were happening in the field of art and very creative. She became very interested in the work of Benny Bufano, as he is known familiarly. She as part of a group of interested artists in San Francisco.

Riess: Do you mean the Catholic Art Forum?

Cunningham: All of those people, yes. Sister Margaret Mary became affiliated with them, and then with many other modern artists in the Bay Area. She was interested in all of the ones that she could make any contact with. She is a very outgoing person and Benny Bufano was very interested in what she had to say about the college, and he came down here on several occasions. I can remember I read a letter of his. (In fact, it was given to me recently by the chairman of the present art department, Dr. David Ramsey. A couple of weeks ago he found it when he was cleaning out his files. His secretary noted the two autographs and two special letters, one to Sister Catharine Julie and one to Sister Margaret Mary, that I had sent up to the art department, and they were sent back here.) He comments there on the lovely day he had with us down here.

Interestingly enough, a picture of myself and Sister Margaret Mary and Benny Bufano looking at some work done here has been in one of the famous books about Benny Bufano. I am in the modified habit of the time.

Cunningham: We had a couple of meetings with him, and he was just a delightful person; certainly a character. To get to his studio way south of Market in downtown San Francisco was really something, climbing around there with him and having him show in his inimitable way what he had done and what he hoped to do. He was a very dynamic little person, as you probably remember hearing.

So, one of the things that Sister Margaret asked him was if there was any way we could have something of his in that particular [centennial] year. We had a celebration down here at the little place where we have his statue. He came down and we had a dedication ceremony, and there was some poetry read and some singing--a special song, I don't remember who wrote it. The student choral groups sang, and it was a very delightful day involving a special California-Bay Area artist of world renown. So I always feel when I go into Hillsdale Shopping Center and see some of his animals or whatever--"Oh, yes, we knew the artist who did those very well."

VI HERE AND NOW

Values: A Rewarding Dialogue Today

Riess: Harking back to an earlier conversation, how well do you now think the parochial schools are doing in teaching values?

Cunningham: First of all, I have to ask you, when you say the parochial schools, the term--

Riess: I mean the Catholic schools.

Cunningham: Yes, because parochial is limited. It's narrow, because it is in the framework of an area, a small center in a geographical area, a school for Catholic students and families who went to that particular church. But a private Catholic school is broader. There are not too many parochial high schools. There are general high schools, and there are no parochial colleges. So we have to broaden the term. I understand what you mean. I just wanted to clarify that again.

The elementary schools and the Catholic schools of today are not as they used to be, I mean the teachers. Say that there are eight teachers in an elementary school, for example. In the earlier days there would be eight religious sisters--or eight religious brothers, depending on whether it was an all girls or all boys school. Now there is maybe one sister who is a principal, or two sisters, and others who are maybe doing special work, and then the rest of the homeroom teachers or the faculty would be members of the laity who had gone into teacher education, and not all of them have to be Catholics.

Most of them, I suppose, in the elementary schools would probably be of the Catholic faith because they are supposed to teach the religious instruction in the school. I mean they are allowed to do it if they have the background. Some, perhaps,

Cunningham: wanted one of the sisters to teach religion, but if they are Catholics, we expect that they would have sufficient knowledge to teach the religious education at that level themselves, and that's why there is a great deal of effort in this day and age to educate the Catholic laity for a prime role in teaching, not only to teach in their families--and that is a very important thing that we are talking about, in our own value process here in the college, family education for values.

I think the whole approach is very different in religious education today, from what we would call the pre-Vatican catechism to post-Vatican religious education. Now, that terminology is specific: there is pre-Vatican catechism, and post-Vatican religious education. You have to reach the same basic values with different terminology, and the methodology has to be different. It is no longer the catechetical method of rote. It has to be an understanding at the level of the age of the child.

I think today's young people--I mean the young people of the normal age coming into college--have an entirely different aspect of the value system from the expectation that we had of those who came to us many years ago. But the whole world has changed. It depends too on what they have learned from their own family background.

One aspect, of course, is that perhaps years ago we would have had maybe ninety percent from Catholic background. We don't have that today. We have a much smaller percentage because we do not have any restriction on religious background, either for faculty or for students. But, by the same token, we feel that the value system must be given to all, and that no matter what the culture or the nationality, what the sex of the individual [is], there are specific values in life that everybody must have to be a good citizen of this world, and we hope of the world to come. It can't be given in the same terminology in which we did a few years ago. We cannot even have the same expectations of behavior, conduct. We'd like to, but we can't expect it. That's not the way the world is today, so we have to be able to give in a modified way and yet not in a lessening way, if you know what I mean, of the value itself.

Riess: Do you think that the Catholic students of your day would even recognize the Catholic students today as being part of the same religion? Do they speak the same language?

Cunningham: No, I don't think they do, I don't think they do. The world has changed, and the presentation of doctrine to the lower grade levels of children and the middle grade, and then in the theology of today as you teach it at the collegiate and university level,

Cunningham: all of that has undergone a great change. Scholars, the biblical scholars, the theologians of today, have special insights into basic values and the way they can be taught in today's world.

Look at the current problems that we hare having right now with the meeting of the bishops in Washington and what they are struggling with--over three hundred struggling to be able to put out within the next few weeks, a document that will be current with the terrible problems of the nuclear threat that we have today. Those bishops are of differing opinions as to what to say, and how much to say, or to say anything.

Yesterday's Catholic students listening to today's would wonder maybe where in the world she or he is coming from. What we have to be able to try, and this is, I know, not an easy thing in today's world, but if we feel that there is something special that we can give in a college of this type and this size, we have to be able to. That's why our faculty has been so encouraged to study the aims of the college and to incorporate those aims, which are based on the value system, in whatever class. Even though everybody takes two courses in theology or in religious education, you can't say everything in those, by any manner of means.

So we try. That's what we're here for, to try to do that, to see if our own personal relationship can make a difference to our students.

Riess: That whole debate about the nuclear issue--what about abortion as a point of discussion in the classroom?

Cunningham: Oh, of course, they talk about it. It's inevitable that it comes up.

Riess: What are the values supposed to be of the person conducting that class?

Cunningham: Certainly the people who are in the class, and the faculty member who is in charge of the behavioral sciences department, Sister Roseanne Murphy, is outstanding as a teacher, outstanding as a person, and as one who has learned specifically to teach the courses in values here at CND and, interestingly enough, the one who has most of the adult population coming to her courses. That means very mature men and women who have had many problems that they have already faced, not that they are going to face, not just those of the seventeen or eighteen year-olds who still must face them.

Cunningham: These men and women, sitting alongside seventeen and eighteen year-olds, have faced the problems, is there or isn't there a God, is there a life after death, what about the religious experience of man? These are the very things that come out in the classroom in these courses today, where probably in other places these same men and women just wouldn't talk about them that way. People, because they are touched--and this I know from hearing faculty members themselves relate how astounded they are at the openness of these men and women, not that they want to get sister, or doctor of this, or doctor of that, behind the door and talk about it--they are willing to talk in front of a class from their own experience.

A sister was just telling us the other night of saying to her class, "You don't have to give me specifics. Just give us a general idea if you would like to be able to share with the class any of your religious experiences, or an experience that you would feel will help." This is a current topic with everybody today, not just here at the College of Notre Dame. But to be able to have people openly talk about it, and want to and to have your class moved even to tears when they are hearing it or when they are relating it themselves--

Riess: That is a very interesting challenge for that classroom teacher. What you are saying is that that belonged in the past in the confessional.

Cunningham: Probably, yes, or in very small counseling sessions, and now this is the kind of thing that is in some classes talked about openly, because it is now open in the world. They will come out and say "Yes, I have had an abortion, or "I have had several."

Riess: Are they looking for guidance or judgment from the sister?

Cunningham: In some instances, perhaps yes. I know there are perhaps some circumstances of maybe additional conferences that they would want in order to talk to her about it, and that is why there are what we call retreats. Do you remember when you asked me about the retreats? We don't today have the whole student body on a retreat at one time, but there are options during the year for students going away to a place of quiet with the priests and the sisters, where they ca talk in the smaller groups or individually.

Riess: The campus ministry--

Cunningham: The campus ministry program sponsors these retreats, yes.

Many of the young people, I mean the middle younger people, are used to the encounter theory. All that sort of thing has had a lot to do with being able to talk out and yet [not] feel

Cunningham: uncomfortable that anybody is going to judge you, but will maybe help you. Or maybe your experience will be helpful to somebody else. Certainly, this isn't what people are expecting, judgment; they are expecting an understanding and I think they are expecting a hope. I think they would hope that faculty members who are here in a school of this type, no matter what the background, whether it was a sister or a priest or a brother or a lay faculty, that there is something that that person has by virtue of being here, that maybe can give the student, no matter what his age, some hope, and that's important.

Riess: Do you think the encounter with religious education, or whatever they take, has brought people into the Church? Do you know of any instances of people who become interested enough to convert or join?

Cunningham: That really hasn't been the purpose.

Riess: I know it hasn't been the purpose.

Cunningham: I am sure there have been some instances, but I rather think that these instances of specific conversion to Catholicism are fewer than many of the deep, inward conversions of heart about which we rarely hear.

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Cunningham: Just the other night I was talking to a man who is on our alumni board, who is here in college now, who has taken twenty years--not here at the college--but twenty years to graduate with a master's degree in business. He is a man who is very personable, just a marvelous man, and he couldn't speak highly enough of the college. He had gone--he has had gaps in his education--for years some place way down in the southern part of the United States, and he just can't get over the fact that he is here in this particular environment talking about personal subjects in class, a situation he has never experienced in any other school.

This particular man happens to be a convert, I think from way back, not recently. I think for most of the students where there have been problems in their life, whether it has been problems of, say, divorce and remarriage and all that sort of thing, problems of a marital kind, problems of abortion, suicidal tendencies or whatever--all of these things I know come out in classes at some time or another--it wouldn't mean that there was a conversion to Catholicism, but maybe a change within themselves so that they can be more at peace. There is nothing they can do about the past to eradicate what has been done, but they can have a hope for the future in the way that they face life, and face God as they understand Him.

Cunningham: This is I think what is most important for us now at the College of Notre Dame, the aim to help people be themselves in the light of the world as we see it to be, and in the light of the world to come as we believe it to be. We feel that if we can let people have a deep hope that that is really the truth, for whatever reasons, or however we can show it to them, or they show it one to another--one person can open up and say, "I've had that kind of experience, and I know what she is talking about or what he is talking about"--[then we are succeeding].

In the law enforcement education program (LEEP) here, many police have wanted to come back. Those men have been out where they have been down on the seamy side of the road, on the wrong side of the road helping people. By taking a program for two years here they had something they hadn't gotten before that has helped them, no matter what religious persuasion they are. And they have had experiences that probably had everybody's hair standing on end in the classroom. I know that some of the teachers that [told] of the experiences that have been talked about in the classroom, that what they [the police] have learned in these classes in religious education in values has helped them with some situations that they thought they couldn't possibly have been able to handle.

Riess: Have you had students who, like Thomas Merton, encountered some of the Catholic theologians in a class, some of the Catholic writing, and saw for themselves that they wanted to come to the Church through the intellectual route?

Cunningham: I am sure that there would be, and we have had from the very beginning priests on the campus, not only in residence but coming in daily. They haven't all been here teaching religious education, they have been teaching their own academic subjects, as well as being a representative and a witness to a special religious belief, but I am sure that those priests have reached people. In talking about history or literature or whatever, and in their own explanation of humanities and life, and in the revelation of what history has been and the historian's view of such and such a period of history, the literature of the American and European writers, even today, of the Asian writers and that sort of thing, these priests have been able to reach people who perhaps didn't talk out in class to them, but would come to them privately. So there is a special value for them in being the religious career person that they are, as well as the academician and professor.

Riess: Have you had opportunities to counsel girls through the years?

Cunningham: Not directly in college. Of course, I did that in my high school work. It would only be--I shouldn't say I haven't had any. I have had it informally, and some of those whom I had many years ago have come back to me and I have met them on occasion and they have talked very openly to me, maybe even more so than they did when they were young girls. A young woman just recently came to see me with her marital problems, and was there anything I could do. She had known me before when I was a younger teacher, and all that sort of thing. So there are those who remember and come back, but I haven't had any official counseling program myself. It's just indirect, really.

Riess: But I mean it would have been one of the reasons that you had gone into this work.

Cunningham: Initially, oh, yes. But in my administrative work I was dealing in different ways, counseling with other kinds of people, not just in a classroom situation. I met people in many parts of the world, and in all kinds of places where I have traveled, whom I have talked to and I have had nice relationships with them. I wouldn't have met them if I had just sat in a classroom, but I know this is a different kind of counseling or information.

Riess: Have there been any points along the way where you have questioned the career you chose? In the early teaching years, for instance?

Cunningham: No, I haven't in my religious career, nor in my academic career. No, I never had wished I had done something else. I might have said I wished I had done more than what I did, or I wished I hadn't done such a thing in my career, but not that I wished I hadn't become a teacher or an administrator or [served] twenty-four years with the college. I know that there are plenty of times, days and nights, that I might have looked pretty tired at the end of the day, or worn out about something, but I never felt that I wished I had done something else. I suppose that's a blessing, that I haven't been kicking against the goad--a specific goad of the day maybe, but not the basics.

Riess: You didn't have moments of yearning to be out in the other world?

Cunningham: No. I suppose I had such a connection in the work that I did that my own interests in people and in things and in current events were taken care of anyway.

Retirement, and the Search for a Successor

Riess: How was your retirement date decided upon?

Cunningham: I made that decision. In fact, when I look back at my own preparation for it, I began eight years before; I started collecting data on presidential search committees and that sort of thing, and I have all of the evidence, all of the data, from 1972 on because I just felt that this retirement was going to come shortly. I was not sick, but certainly I was getting older and I knew there was a point beyond which no matter what you're doing, you have to let somebody else take the helm. So I--saying nothing to anyone--just simply began reading and planning by myself and going to the various meetings that we had with the American Association of Governing Boards. Everybody has been talking much more latterly on proper replacement of the administration.

Riess: Do you mean you were searching for an outside person?

Cunningham: Well, how to do it, because I knew it was no longer going to be the way that some sister would say, "Now, you are going to be the president of the college." Even though it was going to be a sister, we wanted it to be done professionally, the way it has to be nowadays. I wanted it to be done in a proper fashion and I knew that I had to know how to handle the beginning of this.

As for the date, we had had an accreditation in 1975. The next was due in 1980. I knew that from other outgoing presidents that many of them had stayed through a period of accreditation rather than put the burden on a new person--if it were close enough to their own term for retirement, as they saw it. So in reviewing it, I thought then it should be, "I will make the announcement to give the college two years notice ending with the year of accreditation." It was going to be in October of 1980, and that would be the same year that I was going to reach my seventieth year.

Well, it was certainly high time. I know that there are presidents who go on beyond that, but I felt that I could do still plenty of things and give someone else [the chance to] give a new direction, if that need be. I made the announcement in '78 that within two years I would retire. Therefore I would put it in motion, so that there would be the opportunity--I wanted to have a good committee that would prepare the search committee. I knew the search should take possibly a year. Since it had never been done, I didn't want it done haphazardly, or within just a brief period of time. It is too important for the

Cunningham: college, and there were too many things to do, and we had to continue with the work of the accreditation. So it was going to be a dual study, not only for the study of what we did for the past five years and how we were going, but the study for the new directions for the top administrative office. So that was my own decision just to do it that way.

Riess: Was the chancellorship position part of your plan?

Cunningham: No, I did not know what I would be doing after I [retired]. I knew when I was asked initially I would still like to work with the alumni and take care of this building (Ralston Hall) which had been a part of me for so long, and I knew somebody had to do it. That was what I wanted. How it would be done, I didn't know. Then the new president and the group that she was working with and the president of the governing board decided that they would inaugurate this particular title, president emeritus and chancellor of the college. It gives a validity to anything that I still do in the area of business at the college and the president wants me to do.

Riess: The chair in your honor, how did that come about?

Cunningham: It had a twofold reason. They wanted to give me something that would be a gift--you don't give a gold watch or anything like that. It was to give something that would be of benefit to the college which I had served for so long, and in the academic field, and that would have a monetary value behind it. It wouldn't be for me personally and yet it would be a personal honor.

They just dreamed it all up, and then said that's what they were going to do. I was not going to fight that, because that was going to mean a great deal to the college, and as long as it was in any one of the [academic] areas, that was fine with me. They asked me if I wanted to be on the committee and I said, "No, I didn't want to be on the committee."

I was not on the search committee for the president. I would only come in later as a trustee to hear everything, and I met the candidates, of course, as president, but I would not participate in the voting, nor did I want to be on the committee for choosing the one in my name, but I would like to be consulted, that's all.

Riess: Are you able to take time to do any writing or special studies now in these years that you have more to yourself?

Cunningham: I suppose not exactly in the sense in which you are asking, and I haven't done any writing. I have taken time to do more writing to individuals, which is a little bit different from what you are asking me. I am working with the Ralston Heritage Program here, and I am keeping myself responsible for what goes on in this building, because it is something that is such a treasure and such a value to the college, and I have such a personal interest in it and have gotten people excited about it, that that's a big work in itself.

The Gifts of Organization and Intuition

Riess: I think of you as a parallel to Father Hesburgh. Now, why aren't you writing a book? [laughter]

Cunningham: You may call it a parallel, but he's way up there!

Riess: Do you have a yen to write?

Cunningham: No, I think I am much more of an activist than a person who wants to sit down and do the nitty-gritty of writing.

Riess: Go to Golden Pond and sit by the window--

Cunningham: [laughs] No, I don't have that push. I had to give it to myself, of course, when I did writing for this, that, or the other papers or speeches I gave, and for my dissertation and all that sort of thing. But I am just more relaxed. I am on a couple of boards and I am interested in that sort of thing.

Riess: I should hope that your powers of organization are being used by somebody. It will be striking to anybody reading this that whenever you did anything, you certainly knew what you were doing before you did it.

Cunningham: When you have gifts, I suppose, they are not just acquired, but are innate. Working and organization, I get that--you get it from an inheritance in your family.

Riess: Do you think so?

Cunningham: Oh, yes, I do. I think there is something--

Riess: Genetic?

Cunningham: [laughs] Yes, I suppose, of personality traits. That has genetics attached to it because I look back and I see what it has been in my own family heritage. I know that my sister, Mary Frances, always says our daddy, father--we always called him Daddy--had a great eye for detail and for organization, as my mother did and my Uncle William McCarthy, and other relatives in several branches of the family--we don't have too many around now--so you see that it has to be, that on both sides there was something that's there that you aren't responsible for. You just have to use it, and I have enjoyed using it. I know that in the use of it, I am sure that I have made mistakes, but I wouldn't belong to the human race if I hadn't made mistakes and will make them in the future. I think one of the things that I find very important in administration is that you have to plan. You have to have, I think, an eye for detail, and I know that's a problem for me to be patient with those who don't.

Riess: I am sure you have been in many situations where you have had to act on instinct.

Cunningham: Yes, and intuition, but again that has been a gift, and when I have worked against it, I know that I have not been true to myself.

Riess: When you have worked against your--

Cunningham: Against my instincts for whatever reason, whether I thought I had to do it from a policy point of view, but personally I didn't want to, I found that my own personal instinct as an individual apart from my job was much better, but there was nothing I could do about it at the time. I have had to make some decisions and take some steps that I didn't want to do. They were not any big moral issue, I don't mean that, but I didn't want to do them for what I felt within myself was not the best. I did it, and the situation may have been all right from the surface, but I would have felt it might have been better if I had done something else. But at that time, there seemed to be nothing else to do--for me.

Riess: I am glad that you are acknowledging that you have good instincts, because that seems like a different faculty than the ability to sort of plot something out in an organizational way.

Cunningham: I think I have a fairly good intuition, at least a grapho-analyst told me that once! [laughs]

Riess: How did you find yourself having your handwriting analyzed?

Cunningham: Two people whom I know are grapho-analysts, and one early on just gave me a survey from what she had seen of my writing. She had done it for other people, so she said could she do it, and I said, "Sure, go ahead."

Riess: What did she say?

Cunningham: That the intuition was strong and valid.

Riess: [laughter]--She says, raising her eyebrows a little.

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

Riess: Work with Far West Labs--are you able to do some satisfying things there?

Cunningham: I had served on the board of the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development for eight years and my term was completed a year ago and they asked me to serve again, but I asked not to. It was a compliment to be brought back even after a term, because they weren't supposed to take people back, but they wanted me back. I was honored at having my name submitted, but I really felt that I had some other things that I wanted to do.

I was asked to be on the board in the archdiocese of San Francisco for the seminary, so that begins the next year. And then there are a couple of others that I just don't want to say yet, because one is just beginning to firm up, so I wouldn't want to put that down yet.

Serving eight years on that Far West board was a very fine experience. I enjoyed it very, very much although I felt very inadequate when I went in there because I was the only representative of the private sector of higher education and everybody else was in the public arena of business and industry.

Riess: How were you nominated for that?

Cunningham: I don't know. Somebody on the board nominated me, and then they asked if I would serve, and I was encouraged to accept the nomination eight years ago or nine years ago, I guess.

Riess: Who were the other educational leaders?

Cunningham: From the three states, there are about thirty on the board. Public officials and superintendents of schools, this sort of thing. Honig, who is going to be the new superintendent of public instruction, was on the board while I was on it. He was on for a short period of time and then left to get his act together to work for his candidacy. There have been superintendants of schools and deans of public and private--private as for example Brigham Young and some of the universities. But from the private sector such as ours, I was the only representative. The group was from Utah, Nevada, and California. It was a broad western stand, and people there with a national background. It was a marvelous experience for me. I enjoyed it very much, and didn't know really anybody on the board when I went on, but became very, very friendly with all of them and became chairman of the board in my last year which was kind of interesting.

Riess: What does the board discuss? Does it discuss educational policy questions of high order?

Cunningham: Yes, it is research and development in all of the fields of education from the pre-school up through college and university. It is funded in part--a good part of it, not completely, of course--by the National Institute for Education, NIE. It is one of eleven laboratories across the United States for research and development in the fields of education and educational areas of specialty. Of course, all of those things have changed from the very beginning of the laboratory--I wasn't in in the beginning, they had begun several years before I came on the board, it had been established. It is of national importance and so it was a considerable honor. As I said, I certainly felt very ignorant in the beginning because of their terminology and the people who had been in the field of public instruction and the state board of California. They had dealt with education on such a different level from mine that I think I sat there pretty quietly for the first year.

Riess: What kinds of things were you able to bring back to the college and conversely take to them? I think that would be a nice thing to tie in.

Cunningham: I suppose from the point of view of the college, the publications of the Far West Lab, of course, had reached the education department before I was on the board, but it was a knowledge to the people here on the campus that that board had some very fine programs. I know that our continuing education division utilized some of the areas of expertise and the analyses that had been made across the country--the records were, of course,

Cunningham: I suppose in computers up in the laboratories. And our early learning center and elementary school had been able to be part of an analysis from the level of this type of education, private education, on the early learning centers for the board.

Personally, I don't think many of them had known many, if any sisters. There was a sister on the board before I was on it, a very fine sister of another congregation, so it wasn't that they hadn't met a sister. She was very open and very warm and they liked her very much, so I think I was able to keep that feeling. I was able to be as friendly with them as she had been and they enjoyed me. She was a sister of St. Joseph and taught in an elementary school.

But they hadn't known a sister on the collegiate level academically. So I was able to bring a little bit of something that they didn't know. But there are more of those that were informing me than I was informing them. Of course, the people from Utah mostly were Mormons, so they would tease me because I took them to the airport many times and they would say, "Here is the nun driving all of these Mormons to catch the plane back to Brigham Young," and all of the rest. [laughter] So we had a very nice relationship, and I think it was a warming kind of thing for them to know a sister.

Concluding Hopes

Cunningham: I want for the college of Notre Dame the very best it can have as one of the smaller colleges in private higher education in this area, and in order to do that it has to keep up the reputation and the academic work that has been followed through by all of the departments. There are some departments that will have to get a little big stronger and maybe some that just won't be there in a few years. I know that. I know, too, that I am in agreement with the planning of the futures committee, in that I think that we should not get physically any larger in the number of students. Perhaps in the facilities we may need a couple more buildings, and to strengthen some programs to make the college really "tops."

That can be done by the new administration working on what has happened in the past, and with their own insights. Everybody has his or her own insights, depending on the light that he or she receives, and mine were suited for the number of years

Cunningham: that I gave, certainly. I am fully convinced that the College of Notre Dame can go on and be very well respected in the general academic world as well as in the special role of Catholic higher education.

I emphasize that because in the academic world it is much broader than the limitation, say, of the College of Notre Dame. I am not so naive as to think there can't be problems in the future, but certainly I am not so naive as to tell you there weren't any problems in the past.

Riess: Have you left guidelines?

Cunningham: No, I didn't leave any guidelines. I think you have to have your own character and your own way of handling things.

##

Transcriber: Michelle Stafford
Final Typist: Catherine Winter

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APPENDIX A

CURRICULUM VITA

SISTER CATHARINE JULIE CUNNINGHAM

NAME: Catharine Daley Cunningham
(religious name: Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham)

DATE OF BIRTH: October 22, 1910

BIRTHPLACE: San Francisco, California

EDUCATION: B.A. (history) University of California, Berkeley, 1932

M.A. (history and philosophy) Catholic University of America, 1954

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE:

1942-45 Principal, Notre Dame High School, Alameda, California

1945-47 Principal, Notre Dame High School, San Jose, California

1947-55 Principal, Notre Dame High School, Belmont, California

1955-56 Principal, Notre Dame High School, Alameda, California

1956- President, College of Notre Dame, Belmont, California

MEMBERSHIPS IN EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS (past and present offices held):

American Association of Presidents of Independent Colleges and Universities

Association of American Colleges

Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (Trustee)

Independent Colleges of Northern California (Director)

National Educational Association (Director)

National Catholic Educational Association (Director, South West Division)

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Western College Association

HONORS - AWARDS:

Who's Who of American Women

Who's Who In American Collegesand University Administration

Nominated Belmont "Citizen of the Year" for 1968

KABL-TV "Citizen of the Day" in 1965

RECENT PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL EDUCATION MEETINGS - 1973:

Chaired panel at Association of American Colleges annual meeting; January 15, 1973

Gave Invocation and greeting at National Council of Social Work Education Plenary Session; February 25, 1973

TRAVEL: Europe five times; extensive travel throughout United States

CIVIC AFFAIRS: Speaker: Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions

1973

COLLEGE OF NOTRE DAME
Belmont, California 94002
1983-1984

LOCATION, PROGRAMS, AND CAMPUS LIFE

College of Notre Dame had its beginning in 1851 when the Sisters of Notre Dame first settled in San Jose, the early capital of California. Chartered in 1868, it became one of the first colleges in the state empowered to grant the baccalaureate degree. In 1922 the present Belmont site was purchased. In 1965 coeducational fifth-year programs were offered for teaching credentials, first in elementary, then secondary, and finally in Montessori pre-school education. In 1969, the College became fully coeducational, and in 1972 master's degree programs were established.

Offering a career-directed liberal arts education, College of Notre Dame now grants an Associate of Arts or Science, a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree in twenty-four major fields, Bachelor of Fine Arts and the Bachelor of Music degree. Credential programs for multiple subject; single subject; bilingual emphasis; early childhood specialist; special education: learning handicapped multiple & single subject internship; and administrative services are available. The Master of Arts in Teaching is offered in biology, humanities, mathematics, music, and social science. The Master of Business Administration degree, Master of Education degree, with emphasis on Montessori, language disability, special education, Master of Arts in French, Master of Art Therapy, Master of Music, Master of Developmental Therapy, Master of Public Administration and Master of Pastoral Studies degree are also granted.

The Evening Division, begun in 1955, provides a unique opportunity for employed men and women in the Bay Area to earn a Bachelor's degree exclusively through night study. They may choose from eight major fields, including one interdisciplinary major; and many evening classes are open to Day Division students as well. Many workshops, seminars, and lectures series are also available to the community through the Evening Division.

The Faculty: A seventy percent doctoral faculty of priests, sisters, laymen, and women trained in eighty-nine different institutions of America and Europe dedicate themselves to students in small classes and in many informal set tings. The intellectual stimulation from them is challenging and irresistible.

The Campus: Situated in Belmont, a residential suburb of 25,000, the eighty-acre campus was once the summer estate of William C. Ralston, who made his fortune in the fabulous Comstock Lode. The home itself, whose furnishings were gathered throughout the world, is now both a Registered National Historic Landmark and California Landmark as well as a social center for students and alumni. Built around this spectacular mansion is a beautiful modern campus for classes and residential life.

Campus Life: Students enjoy a varied social, athletic, and cultural life on campus, at nearby colleges and universities, in Peninsula cities, and in San Francisco. Because the student body is small and many students live on campus, it is easy to make friends with students and exciting faculty.

The Associated Students sponsor social, athletic, religious, and cultural programs both on and off campus. Through a variety of teams and clubs, students develop and share interest in such fields as art, language, music, drama, international relations, sports, and politics. A student service committee works with local and community service groups.

Foreign Studies: CND students have opportunities to study elsewhere in the United States or abroad. All students may spend their junior year at recognized cooperating colleges and universities in the foreign country of their choice. Students may also earn credit while traveling on college-sponsored tours during the summer holidays and winter intersession.

Religious Activities: College of Notre Dame respects the faith of students of all denominations. Catholic services are conducted regularly in the chapel where everyone is welcome; a wide selection of churches and synagogues is available in Belmont and its neighboring communities. The Associated Students and Campus Ministry also sponsor ecumenical discussions and service, and guest speakers.

COLLEGE OF NOTRE DAME IS AN INDEPENDENT CATHOLIC COLLEGE WHICH IS:

Accredited by:

The Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

National Association of Schools of Music

Approved:

American Dietetics Association

American Montessori Society

California Community Colleges, Credential Section

Empowered by:

California Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing to recommend candidates for the General Teaching Credential for Single-Subject and Multiple-Subject Instruction, Bilingual Emphasis, Early Childhood Specialist, and Administrative Services.

Recognized as a member of:

American Assembly of Collegiate Schools for Business

American Association of University Women

American Council on Education

Association of American Colleges

Association of Independent California Colleges & Universities

College Entrance Examination Board

Council of Graduate Schools of the United States

Independent Colleges of Northern California

National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities

National Commission for Cooperative Education

National University Extension Association

Western Association of Graduate Schools

Western College Association

Western Association of Summer Session Administrators

AIMS

To assist the student to acquire a deeper understanding of Christianity in its Catholic interpretation, to live and experience it relevantly; and to provide knowledge of other Christian and non-Christian religions.

To further the continuing pursuit of truth and love of knowledge in an environment conducive to learning with a program structured enough to ensure a well-rounded liberal arts background and an appreciation of past and present events and values; and flexible enough to encourage independent study, personal judgment, and difference of opinion.

To cultivate the ability to think logically, critically, and independently; to foster a sensitivity to and a proper appreciation for intuitive faculties and creative insights; and to develop the ability to communicate thoughts accurately and concisely.

To stimulate and to increase the capacity of the student to enjoy and to share life.

To foster the free exchange of ideas among all members of the academic community; to assist the individual to become a mature, responsible, world-minded adult.

To provide special academic programs which develop the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue individual and community interests, professional competence, and cultural enjoyment.

APPENDIX C

32—San Mateo THE TIMES R Tuesday, Aug. 1, 1978

Don't Call Notre Dame a 'Finishing School'

By JANET PARKER

Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham bristles at the mere suggestion that the hilltop, private college in Belmont was ever a "finishing school."

With a gentle but firm insistence, she attacks the two-word description of the College of Notre Dame of yesterday.

"I protest the use of that wording. True, we did those types of things but we did them over and above the academics," she says in a conference room overlooking a sunny Notre Dame courtyard.

"We have had to change and realize the need to meet the men and women of today's world on their terms," she adds.

"I am willing to venture a guess that in 10 years the pendulum will swing back and people will want more of the things we use to give."

Sister Cunningham, president of the Belmont campus for 22 years, has seen the 127-year-old college evolve from an exclusive private school for 250 young women to a coeducational, community-oriented student body of some 1,200.

It's still not much bigger than the average San Mateo County high school but it is the only four-year college in the county. That places Sister Cunningham in a unique position as a college administrator in the academic arena from Daly City to Atherton.

Even before she joined the Notre Dame order devoted to teaching, she was a College of Notre Dame student when it was a two-year program. As a sister of the Notre Dame order, she returned to be principal of the high school at the foot of the hill on Ralston Avenue for eight years and was elected president of the prestigious college in 1956.

It's still, she points out, primarily a liberal arts college. But, she insists, Notre Dame has changed.

She was there when the clean-cut look of dresses, nylons and saddle shoes faded in the shadow of cut-off jeans, T-shirts and sandals. At times, she notes, that kind of radical change in college lifestyle has been tough on Notre Dame, but the college has weathered the storm successfully.

"We have had to accept that. And we ourselves as a group of sisters have had to change. You can see that," she says, calling attention to her own attire.

She's dressed in a conservative but fashionable two-piece white polyester suit with a navy blue blouse underneath, an ensemble that would do just fine at the women's club luncheon. The only sign of her religious affiliation is the three-inch, gold-colored order of Notre Dame cross dangling on a chain around her neck.

For a photograph several days earlier, she appears in a more traditional black suit and white blouse resembling a short habit. It's important, she says, for the community to identify her not only as the college president but also as one of the 22 sisters among the college's staff. Sister Cunningham is adamant that, despite changing times, College of Notre Dame retain its identity.

"We have had to swing with the times," she says.

She can't, she says, envision any Catholic college that has survived a trying two decades without changing, although the Belmont campus is the only one of the five Notre Dame colleges that has turned coed. The others are located on the East Coast.

"In the 22 years I've been here, I have seen not base values change but surface values and social niceties be eroded, and we have had to go along with that," she relates.

One would think, she notes, that the changing times have lessened the interest and demand in the religious aspect of a Catholic college's curriculum. Not so, she insists.

One of the recent accreditation teams that examined the College of Notre Dame's status and approved its continued accreditation made an interesting comment on religious education, she says. The team reported that the college actually was short-changing its non-Catholic students in not requiring any religious courses.

Consequently, all bachelor of arts candidates are now required to complete two courses from the department of religious studies. It doesn't mean, she stresses, a course in Catholicism. The list of classes includes "Hebraic Origins," "Prophetic Literature" and "Art and Religion in the Far East."

"We thought we were being broad-minded by not requiring these," she says. The accreditation team, she relates, said the college should not think it's wrong to require a religious education. The college administration now realizes and welcomes that concept, she says.

"We try to give what is different. Or why are we here?" she questions. "Why are we having a separate institution if there aren't some special opportunities for those who come to us?"

One of the aims of the college, clearly cited in the catalog, is for students to "acquire a deeper understanding of Christianity in its Catholic interpretation, to live and experience it relevantly; and to provide knowledge of other Christian and non-Christian religions."

The focus, she insists, is not on religion per se but on values in today's world. It's not proselytizing by any means, she emphasizes.

"If we aren't going to do something a little different, then we don't deserve to be."

Since the first day Sister Cunningham sat in the president's chair in her office next to a courtyard where students congregate, the college has physically grown at a moderate rate.

There are new buildings — like an impressive, airy library — and there are many new programs — including a popular evening college curriculum for adults who are catching up on an abandoned education and gaining credits toward a degree at the same time.

When the college turned coeducational in 1967, an on-campus apartment building was constructed. New majors have been added to the curriculum, expanding the liberal arts orientation, and a business program has been developed.

The teacher credential program has been nationally accredited, meaning that a teacher with College of Notre Dame certification can qualify for a job in some 30 other states, a trait the college shares with Stanford University, among others.

She notes there is a large foreign segment of the student body, each student paying an additional $500 a semester in fees, which now must be considered.

"It's important to know everyone who comes here

(cont.)

(continued from above)

isn't Catholic," she relates. But everyone who enrolls, sees the College of Notre Dame's aims in the catalog and knows of its value-oriented concerns.

"It's important we give them an understanding of Christian life and Christianity and other non-Christian religions," she contends. "We are trying to offer a much more open, value-oriented situation."

One of the challenges facing any private college is making financial ends meet in order to stay afloat, she relates. The tuition today is $2,500 and there is constant concern by the college's board of directors that the campus doesn't price itself out of the market. Room and board on campus is $1,650 a year. More than 65 percent of the students are on some form of financial aid, she notes.

Whenever she can, Sister Cunningham steps outside her office and mingles with students in the courtyard. There was a time when she could know the name of every student, but that task has become impossible in recent years. Now she tries to at least know the residents. It's another reason she likes to wear the Notre Dame cross so that students know she is one of the sisters.

Her favorite spot on the campus is high on the hill, looking down on the campus's 100 acres — "a mixture and blend of the old and the new." It's evidence of the college's growth since it moved to Belmont from San Jose in 1923. The feeling of upward movement toward the hills is also symbolic of the road ahead, she says.

Sister Cunningham doesn't see drastic change in the future. A small college can't take on too much and Notre Dame isn't going to turn into, for example, a college of law overnight. But, she does see a continual path of changing times.

"There has been a crest, but I can see waves ahead," she explains.

APPENDIX D

24 years of putting positive emotions to work at college

★★ Thursday, March 27, 1980 THE TIMES San Mateo—35

By JANET PARKER
Times Staff Writer

One reason Norman Cousins transplanted himself from New York to California, the famed author told College of Notre Dame President Sister Catharine Julie Cunningham Wednesday, was "so I could be 2,500 miles closer to you."

Sister Catharine beamed and patiently listened during a Founder's Day observance on the Belmont campus as Cousins — a longtime friend — praised the president's 24-year drive to develop human resources and "use the gifts God gave us."

"The theme of your administration has had to do with seeing everyone come to their fullest capabilities," Cousins related. Sister Catharine, he said, recognized from the start the importance of the liberal arts — "communicating not just with God but with history."

"You saw the value of not just knowing how to do things but knowing the value of things," the former editor of "Saturday Review" said.

Cousins' appearance was only one of many surprises in store for Sister Catharine in a day-long tribute honoring her upcoming retirement.

It is the end of an era in which the private college grew from an enrollment of just under 200 graduate women to 1,358 men and women attending day and evening courses in bachelor's and master's degree programs.

The day ended with an evening Liturgy of Celebration and reception attended by 700 students, alumni, education officials, well-wishers and friends.

Overwhelmed by the attention bestowed upon her, Sister Catharine thanked her college friends "for making today such a loving day for me."

"Nothing is done without others," she related. "There's been a commitment to work by all who have come to Notre Dame." And, work they have, she said, with hammers and masking tape when needed.

The day's surprises included the presence at the Founder's Day observance of Sister Mary Daniel Turn, superior general of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, who was visiting from Rome.

Sister Catharine was informed that she had been named "Woman of the Year" by the San Mateo County Soroptimists Club.

And, the mysterious "Committee of Nine" which had organized the event compiled a slide show of photographs dating back to the college president's childhood.

She didn't know that her friend Cousins, author of 14 books, including the newly published "Anatomy of an Illness," was in town until she saw him on the auditorium stage during the morning ceremony.

Cousins, now a member of the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, congratulated Sister Catharine "for bringing such a magnificent vision" — the college — "to life."

(Times Photos by Ray Zirkel)

'COMMUNICATING, NOT JUST WITH GOD . . .'

Norman Cousins praised Sr. Catharine Julie's long administration.

Sister, he said, has encouraged members of the college community to come to grips with the preciousness of life, to grow with the arts and "stretch with the horizon."

"The principal problem before the United States is not just squandering of fiscal resources but squandering of human resources," Cousins declared. A major issue for the future, he said, will be the proper use of human beings.

"That has been a dominant theme in your philosophy for you and the people you work with," said Cousins.

Sister Catharine, he said, has "put the positive emotions to work. You have made it possible for human beings to develop fully, to realize their full capabilities."

Sister Catharine, who took over as president in 1956, attended Notre Dame elementary and high schools in the Mission District of San Francisco and commuted to Belmont for her first two years of college.

She was principal of the Notre Dame High Schools in Alameda, San Jose and Belmont. At the college, she has supervised major expansion effort, including apartment units, a second dormitory, library, memorial chapel, swimming pool, recreation center and many others.

In terms of years of office, Sister Catharine has the longest term among college presidents in California and shares the honor nationwide with the Rev. Daniel Hesburg, president of Notre Dame in Indiana.

Dr. Mary Ellen Boyling, chairman of the college's English Department, said Sister Catharine has handled her administration with 'grace, dignity, selfless productive activity and, praise be, a sense of humor."

She has demonstrated, Dr. Boyling said, "dedication, courage, faith and a sense of vision."

"Now, we are searching for someone to succeed you," Dr. Boyling said, as Sister Catharine stood at her side in the auditorium, "but we cannot even imagine one who could replace you."

The Times
Peninsula

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